

## **Seychelles National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks An update of the status**

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### **Introduction**

Shark fishery has been a traditional activity in Seychelles. Recently this activity has been significantly developed due the increase of the demand for shark products mainly fins on the international market. Whilst species-specific information as to current stock status and distribution and the nature of catch is limiting; there is strong evidence (scientific, historical and anecdotal) to suggest a significant decline in shark abundance on the Mahe plateau over the last 70 years. At international level, the decline of many shark populations all around the world prompted the FAO to propose an International Plan of Action for the conservation and the management of shark population which was endorsed in 1999.

Concerned by the declining of shark population, the Seychelles Fishing Authority took some management measure as far back as 1998: the shark-net ban in 1998, the wild animal (whaleshark) protection regulation 2003, logbooks for shark fisheries in 2003, the 2005 shark fining ban for foreign owned vessels licensed to fish in the Seychelles EEZ, and a shark identification booklet (2006). Beside this national measures, others regulations concern the foreign fishing fleets working in the Seychelles water: the European Union banning of fining on all their vessels enacted in 2003, and the resolution by IOTC concerning the conservation of sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by IOTC in 2005.

In August 2005, a first draft of a National Plan of Action in Seychelles was produced by SFA. The aim of this document was to propose ten points to ensure conservation and long-term sustainable use of shark fisheries. In 2006, workshops and consultations with stakeholders were organised to set up a final draft of the plan which should be implemented in 2007.

This paper presents a quick update on the objectives of the plan, the timetable provide for its implementation and finally the main strategies determined for achieving the objectives of the plan.

### **Objectives**

The Seychelles National plan is intended to have an initial 4-year duration (2007-2010) with two aim missions:

- to establish the necessary capacity, systems and databases to enable the informed adaptative management of shark stocks in Seychelles
- to implement an active and progressive precautionary approach to the management of targeted and non-targeted shark fishing effort that takes into account the transitional needs of stakeholder

Ten strategic objectives have been identified in the FAO international plan of action and utilized as basis to establish the National Plan:

- 1). Ensure that shark catches from directed and non-directed fisheries are sustainable.
- 2). Assess threats to shark populations, determine and protect critical habitats and implement harvesting strategies consistent with the principles of biological sustainability and rational long-term economic use.
- 3). Identify and provide special attention, in particular to vulnerable or threatened shark stocks.
- 4). Improve and develop frameworks for establishing and coordinating effective consultation involving all stakeholders in research, management and educational initiatives within and between States.
- 5). Minimize unutilized incidental catches of sharks.
- 6). Contribute to the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem structure and function.

- 7). Minimize waste and discards from shark catches in accordance with article 7.2.2.(g) of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- 8). Encourage full use of dead sharks.
- 9). Facilitate improved species-specific catch and landings data and monitoring of shark catches.
- 10). Facilitate the identification and reporting of species-specific biological and trade data.

To respect these 10 points a working program (presented below) has been proposed in the National Plan.

### **Agenda**

A first draft of the Plan has been proposed in the middle of July and submitted for comments. The final submission is foreseen for the beginning of September.

- August 2005 : First proposition for a Seychellois national plan of action prepared by SFA and MENR
- June 2006 : First stakeholders workshop
- 7th July 2006 : Second stakeholders workshop
- 12th July 2006 : First draft of the NPOA Shark
- 11th August 2006: Presentation of the draft NPOA to stakeholders
- 21st August 2006: Submission of the full draft NPOA shark to SFA
- 26th August 2006: Submission of SFA comments to the consultants
- 8th September 2006: Final submission of the NPOA shark

### **Working program:**

With the consultation with stakeholders, a plan with eleven work programs was made. The implementation of these eleven elements should allow the enforcement of the plan. They are summarized in the table below:

<b>Main thrust of the Plan</b>	<b>Main goal</b>
1) co-management of the NPOA	Establish a multi_stakeholder steering committee
2) immediate stakeholder issue	Resolve the conflict of interest (diving and artisanal fishing) pertaining to near shore location
3) data gathering and management	Ensure a correct and consistent identification of shark species and create an appropriate database
4) research	Improve the information on distribution, biology, ecosystem of the different sharks stock to enable accurate stock assessment
5) managing effort in line with a precautionary approach	Limit effort even if reliable stock assessment are not yet available
6) optimising use of shark catch	Determine the viability and legislation for landing of whole shark:
7) develop/access markets for shark products	Secure assess of local produce and identify needs for the development of local processing
8) non-consumptive sustainable use	Develop ecotourism activities (no sharks fishing area...)
9) review and improve administrative, management and conservation measures	Ensure good enforcement of the plan
10) international cooperation	Share information at regional / international level
11) education and awareness	Provide education, training and information necessary for the general public and stakeholder

For each work program, actions have been identified and prioritised. The urgent actions have to be initiated and completed within the first six months of the plan.

## **Conclusion**

The National Plan has for main objective to ensure that sharks catches from directed and non-directed fisheries are sustainable. It has been established with the participation and contribution of all stakeholders (SFA, MNER, NGO's, IOTC, Fishermen...) and so promotes close cooperation and coordination between the different bodies involved in shark exploitation and conservation. The support of the public and all stakeholders is a priority to ensure the effectiveness of the management and conservation measures, which would be taken.

First actions should take place at the beginning of 2007. Immediate attention will particularly focus on the gathering of data, which are the key for reliable stock assessment and good management advices. For that purpose a shark identification booklet with Scientific, English and Creole names is being finalized by SFA and will then be distributed to fishermen. This and the recent introduction of a species-specific logbook are the first step for a rational management of the resource.

## **Refference**

Report of the Consultation on the Management of Fishing Capacity, Shark Fisheries and Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries. *FAO Fisheries Report*. No. 593.