



*“Working within CITES for the protection and conservation of species in international trade”*

## Spiny dogfish

### *Squalus acanthias*

**CoP14 Prop. 16** (Germany on behalf of the Member States of the European Community) Inclusion in Appendix II in accordance with Article II 2(a) of the Convention and Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP13) Annex 2 a, paragraph A and B.

#### **SSN VIEW: Support Adoption of Proposal**

#### **SPINY DOGFISH POPULATIONS ARE IN DECLINE WORLDWIDE, PRIMARILY DUE TO OVER-EXPLOITATION BY TARGETED FISHERIES AND BYCATCH.**

The Spiny dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*) is a small, highly migratory shark, found in temperate and boreal waters in the northern and southern hemispheres, including the Northwest and Northeast Atlantic, Northwest and Northeast Pacific, South Atlantic and Southeast Pacific. Spiny dogfish occur on the continental shelf, from the intertidal to the shelf slope. They are usually found in large aggregations just above the seafloor.

Spiny dogfish meat is valued, particularly in Europe, where it is a principal species used in fish and chips. Oil, fins and hides are also widely traded in international markets. Demand for dogfish has driven fisheries that preferentially target aggregations of mature, and usually pregnant, females. These targeted fisheries have led to drastic reductions in population size and changes in demographic structure that have resulted in the listing of the Northeast Atlantic population, globally the most important, as Critically Endangered in the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species. The Mediterranean Sea, Northwest Atlantic and Western North Pacific populations are listed as Endangered, and the Black Sea and South American populations are listed as Vulnerable. Over-exploitation by targeted fisheries and bycatch, unregulated trade and inadequate management of populations are recognised as the major threats to this species

#### **THERE ARE CURRENTLY NO EFFECTIVE LEGAL INSTRUMENTS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THIS SPECIES. IT IS NOT LISTED ON ANY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT AND HAS NO LEGAL STATUS.**

Although naturally abundant, spiny dogfish are extremely vulnerable to over-exploitation by fisheries because of their late maturity, low reproductive capacity, long generation time (20 – 40 years), and resulting low rate of intrinsic population increase (2 – 7% per year). This vulnerability is exacerbated because seasonal aggregations of mature females facilitate preferential targeting of the most reproductively valuable population segment by fishermen, leading to persistent low recruitment. Faced with over-exploitation and the absence of appropriate management and regulatory frameworks, populations of spiny dogfish have declined dramatically worldwide. The Northeast Atlantic population has shown a 95% decline from baseline levels (and an 80% decline since 1980), with a 75% reduction in mature females in the last 10 years. Northwest Atlantic female spawning biomass has also declined by 75% leading to seven years of recruitment failure, while landings in the Northwest Pacific have declined by more than 99% in the last 50 years. The species has vanished completely from the western Mediterranean.

Spiny dogfish meat is the most important product for target fisheries and in many bycatch fisheries. It is traded fresh, chilled and frozen, primarily from the USA and Canada to Europe. Declining catches have resulted in a halving of the global export of meat to the EU (from 11,926 tonnes in 1995 to 4,879 tonnes in 2005), yet there are still no management plans in place for this species in the EU, or for the Northwest Pacific population. The Northwest Atlantic and Northeast Pacific populations are only minimally protected, and even with the introduction of quota restrictions in the Northwest Atlantic, there have been no signs of recovery

of mature females or improvements in recruitment. Implementation of the FAO's International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks) remains voluntary worldwide.

### **SPINY DOGFISH MEETS THE CRITERIA FOR LISTING UNDER CITES APPENDIX II**

The Shark Working Group, established by the CITES Animals Committee, agreed in 2004 that this species meets the requirements for Appendix II listing. It is widely recognised that the current level of exploitation of spiny dogfish is unsustainable and far exceeds a level that could be continued in perpetuity (Resolution Conf. 9.24, Annex 2a). Past and ongoing population declines in several Northern Hemisphere stocks, coupled with high market demand, increase fishing pressure on other stocks that are now beginning to supply international markets. Listing on Appendix II will ensure the international trade fisheries are sustainably managed, accurately recorded, and not detrimental to the survival of wild populations. The implementation of CITES control measures for the regulation and monitoring of international trade will reinforce traditional fisheries management measures, thereby supporting the FAO's IPOA-Sharks.

**Spiny dogfish satisfies the biological and trade criteria for inclusion in CITES Appendix II. The increased protection, monitoring and regulation provided by Appendix II are necessary to bring international trade in this species under control and ensure the long-term viability of spiny dogfish populations. SSN urges Parties to support this proposal.**