

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Nineteenth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-21 August 2003

Biological and trade status of sharks (Resolution Conf. 12.6 and Decision 12.47)

PROGRESS MADE BY JAPAN IN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING THE IPOA-SHARKS

1. As this report was submitted after the deadline, it will be provided in its original language (English) only.
2. This document has been prepared by Japan.
3. At its 12th meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 12.49 as follows:

The Secretariat shall encourage CITES authorities of Parties to obtain information on IPOA-Sharks implementation from their national fisheries departments and report on progress at future meetings of the Animals Committee.

4. In accordance with this Decision, Japan submits the following three documents:
 - a) Annex 1: Report on the Assessment of Implementation of Japan's National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks of FAO Submitted to the 25th FAO Committee on Fisheries in February 2003). Due to its length (approximately 70 pages), this annex will only be made available on the CITES website and a hard copy provided to those who make a specific request for it from the CITES Secretariat during the present meeting;
 - b) Annex 2: Kesenuma Declaration (adopted at the "Symposium on Sustainable Use of Shark Resources and Tuna Longline Fishing" on 11 July 2003); and
 - c) Annex 3: Status of International Fisheries Resources (Shark) [Summary of Annex 1].

Kesenuma Declaration regarding Sustainable Utilization of Shark Resources and Tuna Longline Fishing (11 July 2003)

Japan, a nation surrounded by the seas, has protected the bountiful oceans from olden times, incorporated the gifts from the seas into its food culture, transmitted many techniques and much knowledge accumulated by our ancestors, and developed fisheries as an industry providing the graces of the oceans.

Among these benefits from the sea has been the use of sharks. Sharks have been utilized effectively not only as a source of valuable animal protein for the region but for various other purposes. Fins are used as food, and the skin for leather products. Cartilage has been used as a material for pharmaceutical and subsidiary medical products. Squalene which serves as materials for cosmetics has been taken from sharks' internal organs, which together with collagen have beautification effects.

Further, sharks are important species targeted by fisheries. They are harvested and used throughout the world. In addition to their importance as food, they are a significant source of employment and income from a socio-economic viewpoint.

However, some environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and States have called for total protection of these resources, negating the principle of sustainable use and denying dietary culture indigenous to Japan without adequate scientific evidence. In particular, at the meeting of the Conference of Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in November last year (CoP12), two species of sharks were newly listed on its Appendices by 2/3 majority votes and inappropriate application of the Convention. There is a concern that this protectionist approach might expand to other shark species and fish species in the future.

In 2002, the Government of the United States of America, under the Shark Finning Prohibition Act, set restrictions on the landing of shark fins without carcass. Further, some environmental organizations are now calling for a moratorium on tuna longline fishing on the pretext that such fishing results in high levels of incidental catch of sea turtles. These actions demonstrate a tendency to promote unnecessary restrictions in the absence of scientific evidence and in total disregard of the economic characteristics of fisheries as an important industry providing significant social benefits.

Despite the present situation, including where over-exploitation risks depletion of the resources, tuna longline fishing proves to be a resource friendly fishing method as long as it is managed properly. However, excessive restrictions that disregard the fact that many of the shark resources are abundant and can support sustainable use could lead to the unnecessary prohibition of tuna longline fisheries. Such restrictions should be strongly resisted in order to ensure continuation of the tuna longline fisheries.

Therefore, we, approximately 420 fishermen, food industry workers, consumers, academics, scientists and administrators who gathered at the Symposium on Sustainable Use of Shark Resources and Tuna Longline Fishing here in Kesenuma, Miyagi Prefecture, reconfirm the importance of collecting scientific data related to the fisheries resources in order to ensure sustainable use, and declare to promote the following approaches:

1. Endeavor to collect and accumulate data and to use them in an appropriate manner so that sharks, a highly migratory species as defined under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the U.N. Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the UNCLOS of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, shall not be listed on CITES Appendices without proper scientific evidence;

2. Establish a framework of cooperation among States, under the leadership of Japan, so that each State formulates its own domestic Plan of Action while ensuring sustainable use of sharks on the basis of the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks) as adopted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO);
3. Undertake stronger diplomatic actions coordinated by the central and regional governments as well as the private sector on the basis that management of fishery resources based on the UNCLOS shall be implemented by FAO and relevant regional fisheries management organizations having appropriate expertise and knowledge in fisheries;
4. Recognize the importance of tuna longline fisheries as a basic regional food-supplying industry, while enhancing technologies for resource-friendly fisheries and ensuring training and recruitment of fishing vessel crews for the continuation of tuna longline fisheries;
5. Promote effective utilization of fishery resources, while expressing gratitude to the rich bountiful seas and the valuable gifts from them, and mutually respecting the food cultures of each other's country and region; and
6. Disallow unwarranted campaigns which use the pretext of incidental catch of sharks and sea turtles to cause unnecessary regulations on tuna longline vessels and, block the imposition of unscientific and faulty management decisions as is the case of the moratorium on commercial whaling through increasing understanding on the sound state of tuna longline fisheries for the continuation of these fisheries.

Status of International Fisheries Resources (Sharks)

Shark fisheries in the world

According to the catch statistics of shark fisheries in the world compiled by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the catch of sharks and rays in the world has been on the rise from 200,000 tons in the 1940s to 800,000 tons in 2000. By contrast, catch of sharks and rays by Japan continued to decrease from over 100,000 tons in the 1940s to 20,000 tons in 2000, showing decline in demand for those species (Fig. 1).

Table 1 summarizes the catch of sharks by major fishing countries from 1990 to 2000 based on the FAO catch statistics. In recent years, increase of catch of sharks has been observed in Asian countries, with Indonesia increasing its catch from 70,000 tons to 110,000 tons during the period, India from 50,000 tons to 130,000 tons, China from 40,000 tons to 80,000 tons and Pakistan from 40,000 tons to 50,000 tons. Outside Asia, Mexico increased its catch from 35,000 tons to 45,000 tons, with the United States increasing from 30,000 tons to 50,000 tons and Spain from 9,000 tons to 100,000 tons. Japan's catch in recent years stayed on the 20,000-30,000 ton level.

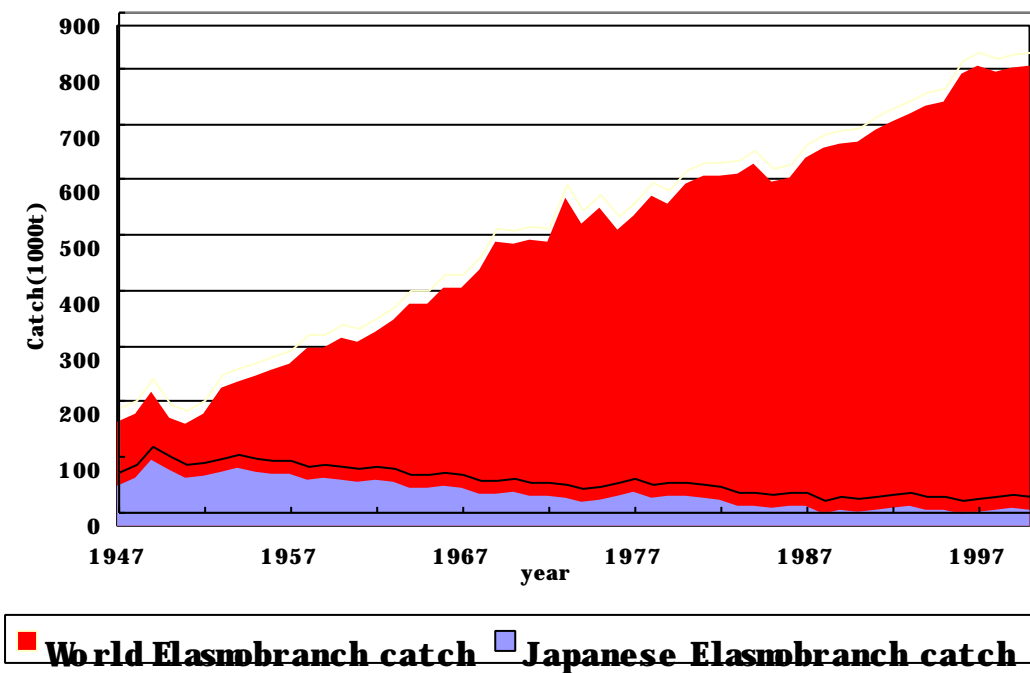


Fig.1 Catch of sharks and rays in Japan and the world

Table 1. Catch of sharks and rays in major shark fishing countries in the world from 1990 to 2000 (unit: 1,000 tons)

	Indonesia	India	China	Pakistan	Mexico	USA	Spain	Japan	other	total
1990	73	51	77	40	45	35	14	32	326	693
1991	76	56	70	45	41	36	15	33	343	714
1992	80	60	65	46	43	54	10	38	332	729
1993	87	77	57	46	44	38	12	39	343	742
1994	93	84	40	50	43	38	21	34	354	757
1995	98	77	45	50	43	38	24	31	357	763
1996	95	132	42	51	45	52	19	24	354	814
1997	96	72	41	48	36	40	99	23	371	827
1998	111	75	40	54	37	45	67	34	353	816
1999	108	77	44	55	35	38	67	37	364	824
2000	112	72	47	51	35	31	77	33	370	828

Shark fisheries in Japan

Japan's catch of sharks and rays had exceeded 70,000 tons in the 1950s, but declined to stay below 20,000 tons since 1995. This decrease is attributable to the decline in landing of bottom sharks and rays, mainly by trawling. Also the catch of oceanic sharks by longline fishing decreased from the 20,000-ton level in the 1980s to the 10,000-ton level in the 1990s.

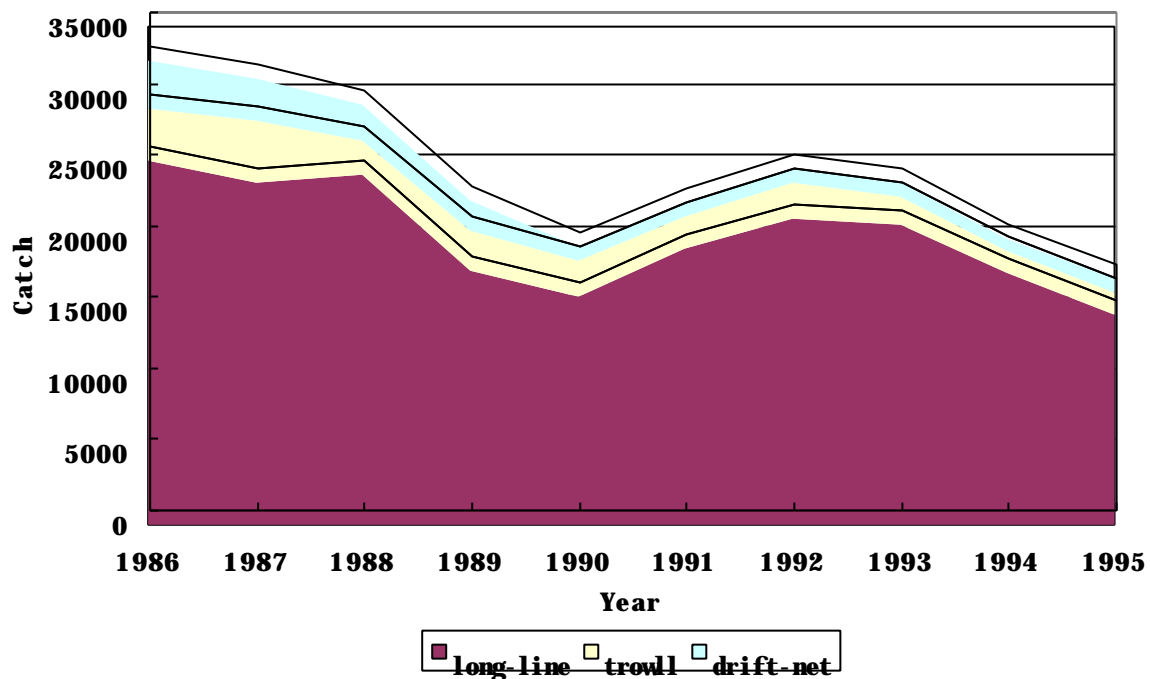


Fig.2 Catch of sharks in Japan by fishing gear type

Catch of sharks by species

Many blue sharks are caught incidentally by tuna longline fisheries. Landing of sharks by Japan's longline fisheries in the 1992-2000 period was 9,900-15,000 tons, occupying 74-82% of the total landing of sharks by longline fisheries.

Shortfin mako sharks have a good meat quality and a high commercial value. Catch of shortfin mako sharks in 1992-2000 was 700-1,300 tons, or 5-9% of total shark catch by longline fisheries.

Most of salmon sharks are landed in the Tohoku region, northern Japan, centering on Kesenuma in Miyagi Prefecture. Commercial value of salmon sharks is high because of its high quality, and their meat, fins and skins are used for food or artifact. Catch of salmon sharks in 1992-2000 by longline and driftnet fisheries within EEZ in 1992-2000, were 1,000-1,800 tons and 300-1,000 tons, respectively, which accounted for 8-16% of the catch of oceanic sharks. Among other oceanic sharks (oceanic whitetip sharks, silky sharks, bigeye thresher sharks and crocodile sharks), crocodile sharks are not used commercially at all. According to the surveys in 1992-2000, the catch of oceanic whitetip sharks was 12-85 tons, bigeye thresher sharks was 455-706 tons. The catch of silky sharks is considered to be minimal although the figure for silky sharks is not certain as it is not classified. Among three large sharks: whale sharks, basking sharks and great white sharks, there existed harpoon fishery targeting basking sharks in the 1960s. But there is no fishery targeting at these species at present.

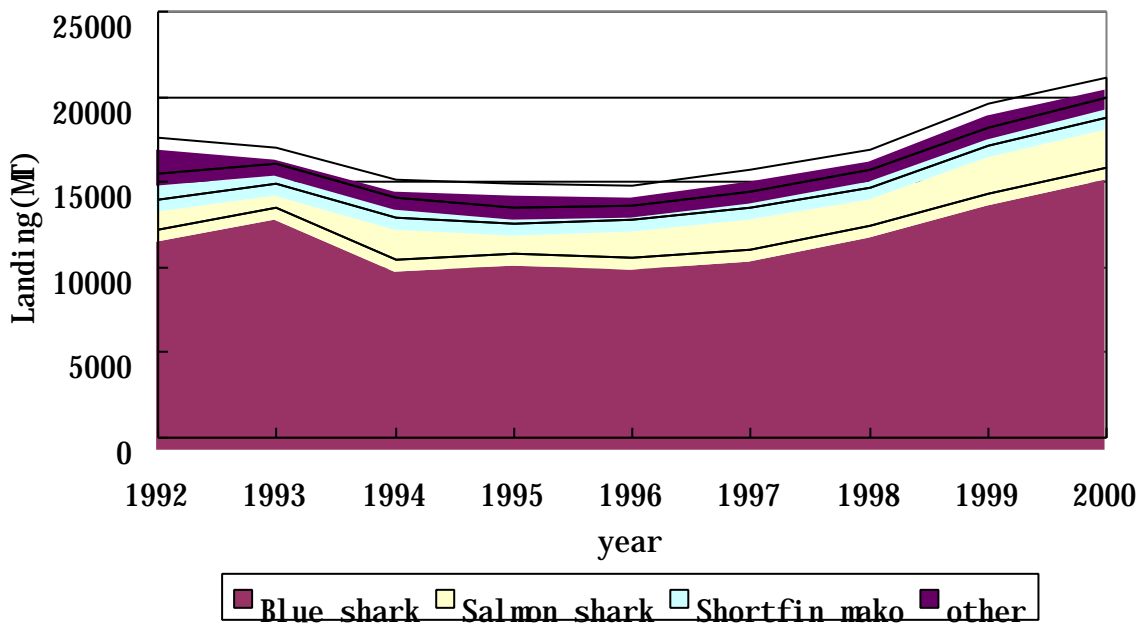


Fig.3 Landing of oceanic sharks

International research

Reflecting rising international interest in conservation and management of shark resources in recent years, collection of catch statistical data and stock assessment of sharks have been promoted in several international fisheries management organizations. Japan is a major fishing country and has been fulfilling its obligation as a responsible fishing nation in providing catch statistical data and releasing the results of its researches, as well as promoting research cooperations with other countries, particularly with respect to oceanic sharks caught incidentally by tuna fisheries.

Resource management

Fishing effort in Japan's longline fisheries catching mainly oceanic sharks has been on decline annually in recent years (Fig.4). However, when we look at the trend of total fishing effort by all the fishing

countries, we find that the catch in the Pacific has been on an increase (Fig.5). In other words, even though Japan reduces its fishing effort, other countries have been increasing their effort, causing the total catch effort to increase, and therefore, has been increasing the fishing pressures on oceanic sharks. Now a framework of shark resource management has been developed at international fisheries commissions, including those managing tuna resources. Currently no catch control for management of sharks is being enforced by regional tuna fisheries management organizations. However, depending on the results of stock assessment, there is a possibility that catch control will be introduced for conservation and management of sharks in the future. Further, in response to FAO's call for development of national plans of action for conservation and management of shark stocks, Japan has developed its national plan of action with framework to monitor the state of sharks in Japan, and will recommend, when necessary, to introduce measures for conservation and management of the shark resources.

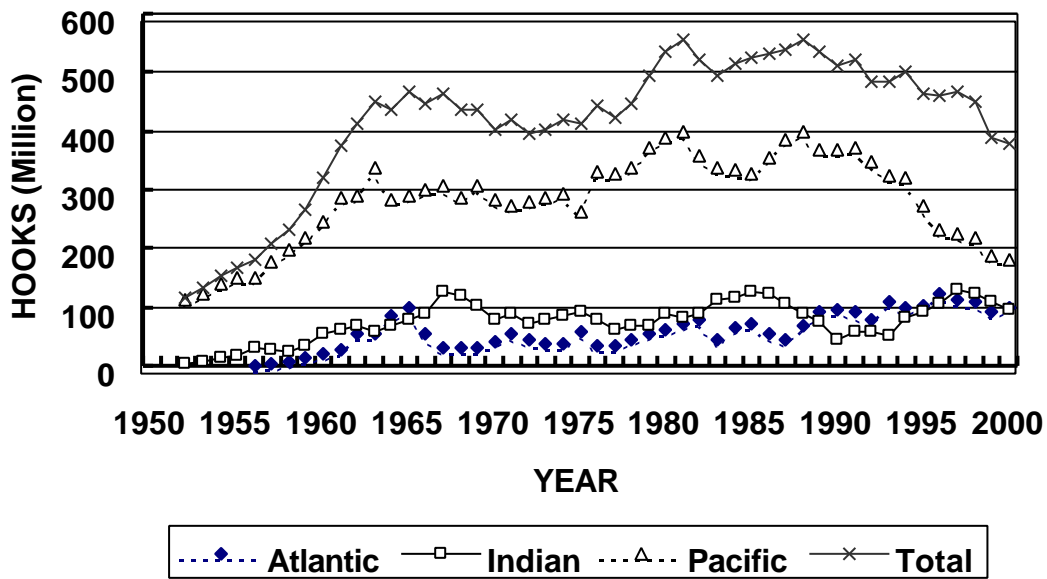


Fig.4 Annual changes in fishing effort in Japan's longline fisheries

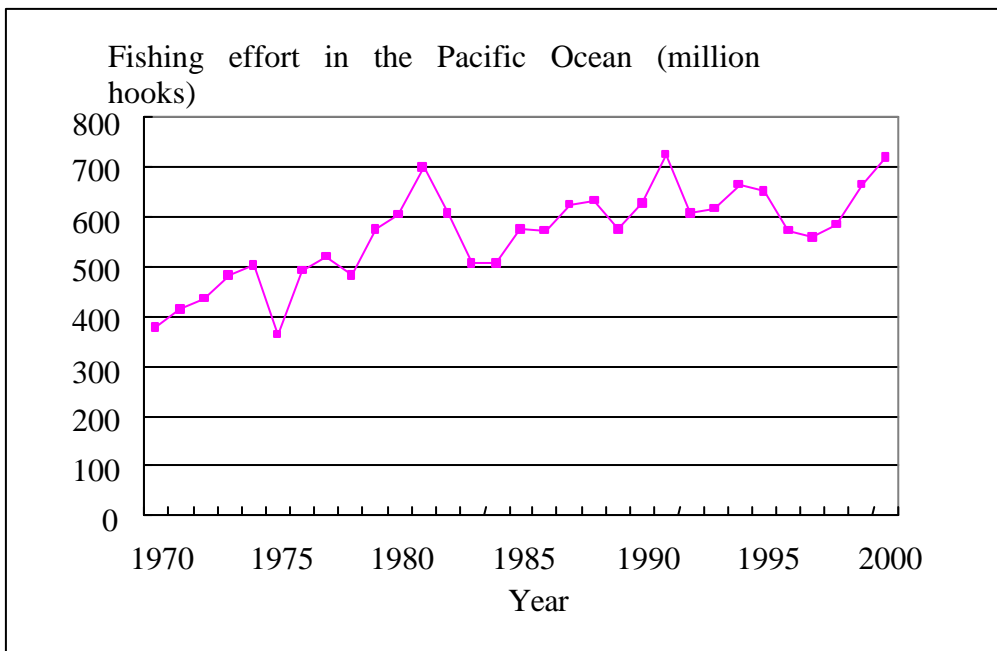


Fig.5 Annual changes of fishing effort in longline fisheries in the Pacific Ocean

Present and future issues

- As shark issues are relatively new, institutions and organizations to deal with them, in the areas of research and administration have not been fully organized.
- Unlike in the case of tunas and billfishes, there exist no long-term catch statistical data that can be used for stock assessment.
- Given the fact that there are many species of sharks, errors in species identification are likely to occur when catch statistical data are collected from fishing vessels.
- As oceanic sharks are highly migratory stocks, cooperation among countries is essential in conducting stock analysis.
- As no specific fisheries targeting large sharks exist and these sharks seldom swim into set nets accidentally, there is a need to establish a system of collecting such information from set nets throughout the country for stock analysis of these large sharks.