



EP(16)17

*Mr João AGUIAR MACHADO
Director-General for Maritime
Affairs and Fisheries
European Commission
1049 Brussels*

22th February 2016

Re: Ban on the shipment of shark products announced by major international freight companies

Dear Mr Machado:

On behalf of the European fishing industry, we are writing to inform you about an extremely serious problem faced by the EU surface longline fishing fleets concerning the embargo on consignments containing shark fins and/or other shark-related products.

Due to the pressure from environmental organisations such as WWF (see the Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) communication and [WWF press release](#) attached), the main international container shipping operators (APL, MSC, MAERSK, Yang Ming, etc) have informed our partners about the veto imposed by these companies on shark fins and/or to any other shark-related products (case of MSC).

This problem had already arisen in some shipments originating in Cape Verde between late 2014 and early 2015. We considered that the explanations given to the shipping companies had cleared up any possible doubt regarding our sustainable practices and stringent laws which are respected at all times by the EU surface longline fleets. Indeed, they rigorously comply with the new European legislation implementing the fins-attached policy¹. In addition, the two shark stocks (blue and mako sharks) targeted by these fleets are in a healthy state according to the relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

However, after having analysed the communications received from the shipping companies (attached), it is clear that they have mixed up the following unrelated issues:

- The consideration of “shark” as a single species and/or a biological category, unifying international trade in one product.
- The extension of certain shark species included in the CITES² lists to all species of sharks sustainably caught and commercialised, regardless of the different biological status amongst them.
- The international trade ban of *all* shark fins due to them being categorised as the same, regardless of the sustainable practices of the EU fleets which have to follow fin-attached measures, ensuring the responsible fishing activity.

¹ **Sharks caught by EU vessels anywhere in the world must be landed with their fins naturally attached** as strictly provided by REGULATION (EU) No 605/2013 of 12 June 2013 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels

² The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

We consider the lobbying and communication activities carried out by WWF in the terms established in the MSC letter as extremely serious, since the information provided by WWF is incomplete or biased as regards the consumption of shark-related products which led these companies to place a general embargo on the shark shipments.

Furthermore, this decision will solely affect EU operators since they are the main users of the services offered by the aforementioned container companies. Foreign operators who are susceptible to “shark finning”³ practices, threatening the state of these stocks and catching endangered shark species will not be heavily impacted since:

- The artisanal fleets of developing coastal States, whose marketing channels do not require the use of this transport logistics.
- Large Asian surface longliners, whose impact on the shark fishery is clear, do not require international container transport services because they make the bulk of their transshipments at sea, and on rare occasions at port, usually to their own market channels, which reduces the possibility to control their catch.

Against this background, the application by large transport companies of these restrictive measures will cause a serious economic damage to European operators whilst leaving the activity of the aforementioned fleets to go unpunished.

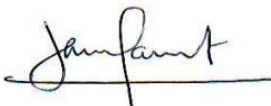
Europêche members will undertake a series of actions aimed at explaining the sustainable practices and regulations followed by our fishermen. For this purpose, and in order for this campaign to be successful, we need the assistance of the EU trade and fisheries authorities that represent and support them. Therefore, we demand the competent services of DG MARE, DG TRADE and DG MOVE to undertake the appropriate measures to explain to these companies the sustainable practices performed by our European fishermen who do not target endangered shark species and respect the fin-attached policy imposed by the EU.

In addition, we encourage the European Commission (EC) to explain to the representatives of WWF the huge negative economic consequences generated by the biased information issued from this organization. Furthermore, the EC should urge WWF to clarify the differences between the EU and foreign fishing fleets as well as the contrasting states of shark stocks.

Finally, as a matter of urgency, we insist on the creation of some sort of label which endorses the form of capture and processing of sharks marketed by the EU surface longline fleet.

We remain at your disposal for any further clarification on this issue.

Looking forward to your response, yours sincerely



Javier Garat,
President of Europêche



Pim Visser,
President of EAPO

CC: *DG TRADE Director General Mr Demarty*
DG MOVE Director General Mr Hololei
DG MARE Director of International Affairs and Markets Mr Depypere

³ Shark finning refers to the removal and retention of shark fins while the remainder of the shark is discarded in the ocean.