

Japan's National Plan of Action  
for  
Conservation and Management of Sharks

Revised Version

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Fisheries Agency  
Government of Japan

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1. Introduction (Basic Principles and Objectives)

- (1) Japan, as a responsible fishing nation, confirms the recognition of the international community that fisheries are an important industry playing “the significant role in providing food security for the world, both through food supplies and through economic and social well-being” (Kyoto Declaration on Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security and its Action Plan). In addition, Japan duly respects the international agreement that “the States should commit themselves to the conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources” (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and Chapter 17 of Agenda 21) and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that calls for promotion of contribution of fisheries to food security.
- (2) Japan recognizes that sharks are important fishery resources. Since sharks are being caught by various types of fisheries in many countries, it shares the view that shark catches should be properly managed and hence adverse impact on shark resources should be minimized. At the same time, Japan is concerned that sharks have been subjected in recent years to illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing and improper activities of cutting only fins and disposing other usable parts of the body.
- (3) With a view to cope with such situation, Japan adopted in 2001 an effective and practicable National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (NPOA-Sharks) after having analyzed objectively and scientifically the impact of Japanese fisheries on shark resources, and taking into account the FAO's “International Plan of Action for Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks)” adopted in 1999. Since that time, through implementation of its NPOA-Sharks, Japan has been securing scientific knowledge and information on shark resources and ensured rational conservation and sustainable utilization of shark resources based on proper knowledge and information.
- (4) Japan has expanded and strengthened management measures for sharks and, for these purposes, amended relevant domestic legislations in due course. This time, Japan will revise its NPOA-Sharks with due amendments and corrections in order to reflect those changes and ensure its stepped-up management system.

2. State of Fisheries and Species subjected to NPOA-Sharks

- (1) Regarding the state of the fisheries and species subjected to NPOA-Sharks, analyses have been carried out based on updated information, every year. Details

of the analyses are described in the “implementation report on NPOA-Sharks”, which Japan has submitted to FAO every two years.

- (2) An expert group consisting of Japanese scientists and experts was established in 1999 and has met regularly to assess the state of shark resources concerned. Furthermore, in order to enrich information necessary for such assessment, collection of information and scientific data as well as research activities including the followings will be continued.
  - (i) Catch data provided by commercial fishing vessels;
  - (ii) Research data from research vessels belonging to the national and prefectural governments and other institutes;
  - (iii) Scientific data collected by scientific researchers on board fishing vessels;
  - (iv) Data on landings at the landing ports in Japan; and
  - (v) Catch statistical data collected by the national and prefectural governments

### 3. Management Measures

- (1) Many types of fisheries in Japan are placed under the jurisdiction of the national or prefectural governments pursuant to the Fisheries Law and Fisheries Resources Conservation Law, and entry into those fisheries is limited under license systems of respective governments. Especially, regarding fisheries which directly targets sharks or has substantial by-catch of sharks, most are the fisheries licensed by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries or prefectural governors. It is not likely that fishing pressures on shark resources would increase in the future because of such rigid license system and further because Japan has no intention of expanding the scale of fisheries where sharks are either directly or incidentally caught.
- (2) Japan is member to all the regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) for the areas where sharks are assumed to be targeted or caught incidentally in longline fishing. Japan is obliging its fishers to comply with all the management measures of those RFMOs as conditions for granting the fishing licenses. The Government of Japan will have fishers comply with any new measures when they are duly introduced in the future.
- (3) In view of the present situation where wasteful use (or non-use) of sharks by bringing back only their fins has been disputed globally, and in order to enhance a thorough and effective use of sharks by bringing them back to port, landing of whole bodies of sharks in possession has become mandatory for distant-water tuna fisheries, near-shore tuna fisheries, and coastal tuna longline fishing. In case incidentally-caught sharks are not in possession, information on those incidental catch are required for reporting, through which further strengthening of shark resources monitoring is expected.
- (4) It is considered that effective utilization and proper management of shark resources can be realized by ensuring a thorough compliance with the above measures.

Also taking into account the increasing international interest in shark resources management, and in view of the need to pay adequate attention to the future trend of shark resources, the following scheme will be continued.

- (a) Assessment of shark resources shall be carried out on a regular basis at the expert group mentioned in 2. (2) above.
- (b) Based on the assessment by the expert group, discussions shall be made on the need of other management measures at a committee composed of scientists, administrators and fishers. Steps shall be taken, where necessary, to reflect results of the discussions in the NPOA-Sharks. The following topics should be especially taken into account in the discussions:
  - (i) biological characteristics and sustainability of the target species
  - (ii) characteristics of the fisheries in target
  - (iii) safety of fishers and appropriateness of obligations relating to conservation and management measures
  - (iv) social and economic impact of conservation and management measures

#### 4. Promotion of Wise and Effective Utilization of Sharks

- (1) In the regions where sharks are landed in a certain amount on a constant basis, there exists high-level utilization of sharks. In other words, the shark meat is used as a common cooking ingredient, and some parts such as heart are valued as delicacies. Furthermore, skins are used as materials for high-grade leather products and cooking utensils, and bones are used for pharmaceuticals. Thus, it can be said that the degree of the use of sharks in Japan is higher when compared with other countries.
- (2) However, even in Japan, in the regions where sharks are not the main target of fisheries and are landed only as by-catch species on an irregular basis, high-level use as stated above is difficult due to the absence of producers and processing facilities. Therefore, the economic value of sharks is low. Since such a situation keeps low interest in shark resources among fishers and the society at large, efforts shall be made to continue research and studies regarding development of new ways of use so as to enhance the added-value of sharks and to promote higher-level use of shark resources.
- (3) In some fisheries such as distant-water tuna longline fishing operating in remote areas from the domestic market over a long span of time, usually only fins were brought back because of the limited storage capacity. However, following the revision of the ministerial ordinance in 2008, it has been required to land all the parts of sharks in possession in order to promote effective utilization of all the usable parts of sharks\*. \*In order for rectifying the storage problem, headed, gutted and/or skinless form is allowed.

## 5. Educational and Outreach Activities

- (1) Enhancing social awareness on FAO IPOA-Sharks and Japan's NPOA-Sharks among not only fishers but also the general public is a very important factor in promoting sustainable utilization and conservation of shark resources in Japan. In addition, it is crucial to collect accurate data in order to properly assess shark resources. To this end, Japan will continue efforts to enhance the awareness regarding the importance of proper fisheries management in accordance with its NPOA-Sharks by implementing and strengthening educational and propaganda activities for those related to fisheries.
- (2) Several activities have been promoted in Japan, such as preparation and distribution of pamphlets and posters for species identification. Those activities, especially following activities will be further strengthened.
  - (i) distribution of Shark Species Identification Sheet (ID-Seat), and organizing seminars for fishers regarding stock management;
  - (ii) educational activities to the general public regarding how sharks have been related to the Japanese culture;
  - (iii) distribution of promotion items such as cartoons, videos, posters, etc;
  - (iv) provision of relevant and updated information to fishers and fisheries organizations, and;
  - (v) educational and outreach activities to young successors

## 6. Promotion of International Cooperation

- (1) In accordance with the provision of FAO's IPOA-Sharks, state of implementation of its own NPOA-Sharks will be continuously reported to FAO. Further, regarding conservation and management of sharks, Japan will continue its positive contributions to strengthening cooperation at both FAO and RFMOs concerned to ensure introduction of further effective management measures.
- (2) Regarding IUU fisheries that undermines international cooperation and efforts of countries concerned regarding conservation and management of fisheries resources including sharks, Japan will specifically enhance its cooperation with countries concerned as well as FAO and relevant RFMOs for elimination of those fisheries.