

MARKET BRIEF ON SHARK FINS
OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD MARKET

ITC



INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE UNCTAD/GATT
GENEVA
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Shark fins - Overview of the world market

This market brief has been prepared in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). CITES is an international legal instrument which regulates international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants to ensure their survival. As of June 1995, CITES has a membership of 128 States. Further information can be obtained from the Secretariat (see Useful addresses and annex I).

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

This market brief covers shark fins, dried but not smoked, which are classified under the following codes:

SITC (3) 035.13 Fish, dried, whether or not salted, n.e.s. (HS 0305.59)

The objective of this market brief is to inform export enterprises in developing countries on the latest developments of the world market for shark fins. An estimated 70 developing countries and territories are involved in this export trade which is expanding. This brief will focus on Hong Kong, China and Singapore, the world's major markets.

PRODUCTION¹

According to FAO statistics, India, Japan, Yemen, Macau, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia are among the largest shark fins producing countries. However, it is not possible to give a precise overview of world production as many countries do not publish production statistics.

WORLD TRADE

An exact account of the world market is not possible as foreign trade statistics in several trading countries do not provide separate data on shark fins. Based on national statistics available, world imports in 1994 can be estimated at 10,000 metric tons and US\$ 280 million. More than 95 % of the world imports of shark fins, by quantity, are accounted for by Hong Kong, China and Singapore. However, a large share of imports into Hong Kong and Singapore is re-exported.

MAJOR IMPORT MARKETS

Hong Kong is by far the world's largest importer of shark fins. In 1994, total imports amounted to 5,235 metric tons (36% more than in 1990) valued at HK\$ 147 million (US\$ 191 million). The volume of imports is a direct function not only of domestic demand but of the re-export potential to China. Several developing countries are among the major suppliers of fins to Hong Kong; it is interesting to note that imports from the United Arab Emirates have increased considerably.

¹ **Finning** involves cutting the fins of the sharks and boiling them to remove the outer skin. The fins are salted several times, in a ratio of approximately 1 part of salt to 10 parts of fish. The fins are then washed in water and either hung up or spread out to dry in the sun. Large fins take up to one month to dry under ideal conditions. The moisture content after drying is generally about 7-8 %. Additional information and technical assistance on fish production and processing can be obtained from FAO.

Product	Indicative prices		Market	Origin
	S\$	US\$		
Black sharkfins Dorsal/pectoral 40 cm above	75.00	51.37	CIF Singapore	India
30-40 cm/pc	65.00	44.52		
20-30 cm/pc	52.00	35.61		
10-20 cm/pc	40.00	27.40		
below 10 cm/pc	15.00	10.27		
Blue shark, Pectoral, lower dorsal set	50.00	34.25	C&F Singapore	South America
Yellow fins, Dorsal/ pectoral & tail 30 cm above	70.00	47.10	CIF Singapore	India
Yellow fins (Illuppa) Dorsal/pectoral & tail 30 cm above	60.00	41.10	CIF Singapore	India
Black tails 40 cm above	225.00	154.11	CIF Singapore	India
30-40 cm/pc	190.00	130.14		
20-30 cm/pc	150.00	102.74		
10-20 cm/pc	125.00	85.62		
below 10 cm/pc	55.00	37.67		
US\$ 1 = S\$ 1.46				
Source: Infofish, FAO.				

DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

Distribution channels vary from one country to another. Importers of shark fins often play a multiple role and act as importers, wholesalers and processors in some cases. Importers prefer sources of supply to be as close as possible to reduce shipping time and cost. A list of importers covering major markets can be provided against payment (free of charge to least developed countries).

COMMERCIAL PRACTICES

Importers purchase on the basis of samples; small lots are preferred. Payment is usually by at-sight letter of credit. Importers normally keep a 2-3 month stock to react quickly to market changes. They handle both dried (unprepared) and prepared fins.

PACKAGING

Contrary to most fish for direct human consumption, shark fins do not require expensive refrigeration and processing to avoid spoilage and they can be easily dried and packed. Fins are packed in polyethylene bags (inside lining) which are placed in jute sacks, under pressure, so that

Hong Kong

CITES Scientific Authority
 Agriculture and Fisheries Department
 Canton Road Government Offices
 393 Canton Road, 12th Floor
 Kowloon
 Tel: (852) 733 21 28
 Fax: (852) 311 37 31

China

China International Economic Information
 Centre (CIEIC)
 Information Service Division
 B-12, Guanghua Road
 Jianguomen Wai
 Beijing 100020
 Tel: (8610) 505 15 74
 Fax: (8610) 505 15 71

Singapore

CITES Scientific/ Management Authority
 Primary Production Department
 Ministry of National Development
 National Development Building
 Maxwell Road
 Singapore 0106
 Tel: (65) 325 76 40
 Fax: (65) 220 60 68

China Council for the Promotion of
 International Trade (CCPIT)
 Economic Information Department
 China Chamber of International Commerce
 1, Fuxingmenwai Street
 Beijing 100860
 Tel: (8610) 851 33 44
 Fax: (8610) 851 13 70

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Customs General Administration of China (CGA) for import and export statistics
 6 Jain Guo Men Nei Ave, Beijing 100730.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
 Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy.

- Shark utilization and marketing (1978)
- Fishery statistics (various issues)

World Wildlife Fund International (WWF)
 Ave. de Mont-Blanc, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland.

- Sharks Species of special concern, (vol. 11, 4/11192)

Infofish

PO Box 10899, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

- Infofish Trade News, Fish and Health (vol. 2/93)
- Transportation of Live And Processed Seafood (Technical Handbook 3)

The Nature Conservation Bureau

36 Kingfisher Court, Hambridge Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14, United Kingdom.

- Shark Specialist Group News, Shark News (various issues)

Annex I**CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF
WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES)**

Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Fort Lauderdale (United States of America), 7 to 18 November 1994

RESOLUTION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**Status of International Trade in Shark Species**

NOTING the increase in the International trade in parts and derivatives of shark, and the document on this issue (Doc. 9.58) submitted by the United States of America;

CONCERNED that some shark are heavily utilized around the world for their fins, skins and meat;

NOTING that level of exploitation in some cases are unsustainable and may be detrimental to the long-term survival of certain shark species;

NOTING that, at present, shark are not specifically managed or conserved by any multilateral or regional agreement for the management of marine fisheries;

NOTING further the ongoing initiatives to foster international co-operation in the management of fisheries resources;

CONCERNED that the international trade in parts and products of shark lacks adequate monitoring and control;

RECOGNIZING that the members of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Shark Specialist Group are currently reviewing the status of sharks and the global trade in their parts and derivatives in the course of developing an action plan on shark conservation;

CONSIDERING that the conference of the parties has competence to consider any species subject to international trade;

RECOGNIZING that other intergovernmental organizations and bodies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), have undertaken effort to collect elaborate statistical data on catches and landing of diverse marine species, including sharks;

RECOGNIZING further that the collection of species-specific data is a complex task, considering that there are some 100 species of sharks being exploited both commercially and for recreation and that numerous countries utilize this marine resource;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

URGES the parties to submit to the Secretariat all available information concerning the trade and biological status of sharks, including historical catch and trade data on shark fisheries;

.../

How CITES works

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international legal instrument that was signed in Washington, D.C., on 3 March 1973. It entered into force on 1 July 1975 and now (June 1995) has a membership of 128 States.

The aim of the Convention is to ensure the co-operation of contracting States (Parties) to prevent international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants from threatening their survival.

CITES works by subjecting trade in readily recognizable specimens of selected species to certain controls. The species covered by CITES are listed in three appendices, according to the degree of protection they need. These appendices are revised at the biennial meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.

Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

Each Party to the Convention must designate one or more Management Authorities in charge of administering the licensing system and one or more scientific authorities to advise them on the effects of trade on the status of the species. A specimen of a CITES-listed species may be imported into or exported (or re-exported) from a State party to the Convention only if the appropriate document has been obtained and presented for clearance at the port of entry or exit.

Source: CITES.

Annex II

Singapore: imports of shark fins, dried or salted, 1992-1994						
Q: metric tons V: S\$ '000	1992		1993		1994	
	Q	V	Q	V	Q	V
Yemen	181	7,892	149	5,821	160	5,821
India	176	4,961	162	4,047	135	5,360
Japan	95	6,719	81	5,293	118	6,087
Mauritius	8	282	35	373	92	517
Hong Kong	124	12,170	130	11,449	90	7,752
Pakistan	106	4,497	72	2,078	78	2,635
Sri Lanka	60	3,812	55	3,300	72	3,196
Spain	36	1,953	77	2,073	66	1,546
Korea DPR	39	2,003	36	2,047	63	2,571
Taiwan Prov. (China)	24	867	80	859	55	979
USA	6	425	14	1,454	37	1,952
Kenya	11	510	15	587	29	1,052
UAE	34	2,107	12	1,046	24	1,753
Maldives	17	1,030	16	1,142	23	985
Australia	5	311	15	1,075	8	561
Oman	32	1,709	37	278	3	121
Others	107	5,650	150	8,722	177	7,374
Total	1,061	56,898	1,136	51,644	1,230	50,262

Singapore: export of shark fins, dried or salted, 1992-1994						
Q: metric tons V: S\$ '000	1992		1993		1994	
	Q	V	Q	V	Q	V
Hong Kong	673	47,742	632	40,611	732	49,422
Malaysia	110	1,840	106	1,516	112	7,811
Taiwan Prov. (China)	5	171	4	166	66	544
Myanmar	110	2,611	81	2,042	59	2,702
Thailand	12	580	30	1,413	38	2,681
Japan	4	111	2	281	1	100
Australia	1	219	2	299	1	43
Others	63	3,285	10	755	33	1,561
Total	978	56,559	867	47,083	1,042	64,864

S\$ 1 = US\$ 0.6138 (1992); 0.6188 (1993); 0.6547 (1994).

Source: Singapore National Statistics.

Hong Kong: re-exports of shark fins, dried or salted, 1992-1994						
Q: metric tons V: HK\$ '000	1992		1993		1994	
	Q	V	Q	V	Q	V
China	2,080	155,871	2,077	158,735	2,664	200,666
Singapore	138	50,254	137	42,778	104	34,495
Japan	53	21,839	68	30,263	69	32,980
Canada	20	16,378	16	13,753	23	21,789
USA	21	7,990	23	22,066	35	13,764
Others	92	34,234	98	41,534	83	27,386
Total	2,404	286,566	2,419	309,129	2,978	331,080
HK\$ 1 = US\$ 0.12915 (1992); 0.12943 (1993); 0.12930 (1994).						
Source: Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department.						