



## University of British Columbia; Appetite for shark fin soup drives massive shark population decline

665 words

25 September 2018

China Weekly News

CHWKNNW

257

English

© Copyright 2018 Chemicals & Chemistry via NewsRx.com

2018 SEP 25 (VerticalNews) -- By a News Reporter-Staff News Editor at China Weekly News -- Consumers need to stop demanding shark fin soup and other products in the absence of robust laws and sustainable practices regulating shark overfishing, research co-authored by the Sea Around Us initiative at UBC has found.

The study, conducted by researchers from the University of Hong Kong, the Sea Around Us initiative at the University of British Columbia and WildAid HongKong, shows that wealthy consumers' growing appetite for luxury items like shark fin soup has led to massive declines in populations of some shark species in recent years.

"Sea Around Us data show that shark catches amount to approximately 1.4 million tonnes per year, more than double what they were six decades ago," said Daniel Pauly, study co-author and principal investigator with the Sea Around Us initiative at UBC's Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries. "This overexploitation has led to almost 60 per cent of shark species being threatened, the highest proportion among all vertebrate groups."

The study argues that the problem lies with both legal and illegal fisheries, and how challenging it is to enforce sustainable fishing practices in the high seas. The overwhelming bulk of shark fins traded globally originate from the unmanaged fisheries of less economically developed countries like Indonesia, where annual shark catches exceed 100,000 tonnes.

India, Spain and Taiwan also play an important role in the netting of sharks and subsequent sale of their fins in international markets, particularly in Hong Kong from where they are later re-exported to mainland China.

"Hong Kong is the entry point for about half of all globally traded dried shark fins. They are the main ingredient of shark fin soup, which is a prestigious dish to ethnic Chinese both in China and abroad, eaten in banquets, Lunar New Year celebrations, or high-end restaurants," said Yvonne Sadovy, lead author of the study and professor at the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Hong Kong. "The exclusiveness linked to the product combined with its limited natural supply increases its price and makes it an attractive trading good for business networks, particularly for those with shady or illegal practices."

The study estimates that only 4,300 tonnes of dried fins are produced sustainably every year, while a further 25,000 tonnes originate from largely unsustainable and illegal fisheries. Telling the difference between the two is extremely difficult as the mixing of catches is a common practice that hampers traceability efforts.

"Shark finning and the mixing of catches tend to take place in the open seas or in remote ports, where there is little to no oversight. Moreover, authorities show little interest in controlling illegal wildlife trade or if they do, their enforcement capabilities are very limited," said Pauly.

Waiting for multilateral organizations to develop and enforce rules regarding shark finning and regulate fin trade to protect the species is not an option because time is not a luxury many sharks have.

"Extinction must not make the decision for us. Consumers have to act fast and decide what is acceptable and what is not when it comes to luxury, vulnerable, uncontrolled species. The appetite for shark fin soup is growing in places like Vietnam and Macau but slowly declining in Hong Kong and mainland China, where young people are starting to see it as a cultural practice that is worth abandoning," Pauly said.

The paper "Out of control means off the menu: The case for ceasing consumption of luxury products from highly vulnerable species when international trade cannot be adequately controlled; shark fin as a case study" was published in Marine Policy. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2018.08.012>

Keywords for this news article include: Asia, China, Hong Kong, University of British Columbia.

Our reports deliver fact-based news of research and discoveries from around the world. Copyright 2018, NewsRx LLC

Document CHWKNW0020180925ee9p0000r

### Search Summary

Text	daniel pauly
Date	All Dates
Source	All Sources
Author	All Authors
Company	All Companies
Subject	All Subjects
Industry	All Industries
Region	All Regions
Language	All Languages
Results Found	1,419
Timestamp	29 March 2019 4:42 PM