



Environment & Health

NGO says blue sharks face extinction as ‘unscrupulous’ Maxim’s restaurant refuses to scrap shark fin soup

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Around 50 green activists held a protest outside Maxim’s at the University of Hong Kong on Saturday to protest the restaurant chain’s provision of shark fin soup.

Shark fin soup is a popular item on set menus for large banquet gatherings – especially during weddings or Chinese New Year. Finning involves the removal of fins from sharks whilst the animal is still alive. They are sometimes then dumped back into the ocean where they die of starvation as they are unable to swim properly, according to NGO WWF.

Photo: WildAid.

A study released last week found that 80 per cent of Lunar New Year banquet menus in Chinese restaurants offer dishes made from shark fin, and only half of the restaurants offer shark-free options for consumers.

The activists held banners urging the restaurant to stop killing blue sharks. They handed a letter to a representative from the restaurant. It included scientific data indicating declines in blue shark populations, and was signed by more than 250 local and international green groups – including notable marine scientists Dr Daniel Pauly and Dr Boris Worm.

According to NGO WildAid, blue sharks are being overfished by Spanish industrial fishing boats in the Northwest Atlantic at unsustainable rates due to a lack of catch limits. Last year, Spain exported 628 tonnes of frozen shark fin to Hong Kong, according to data provided by the government.

Photo: WildAid.

WildAid accused Maxim’s of refusing to stop selling blue shark fin because of “lucrative profit margins” and said the “unscrupulous commercial activity threatens species with extinction.”

The group also said that the restaurant’s “unsustainable and environmentally damaging operations” clashed with the university’s sustainability policy. In response to a letter sent by WildAid on the topic, the university said in January that it is currently in a contractual relationship with Maxim’s that it is unable to terminate immediately, but will give “full consideration” to the concerns during contract renewal or renegotiation.

“Maxim’s claim to take responsibility in sustainable sourcing, but scientists have independently confirmed that there is simply no such thing as sustainable blue shark fisheries,” WildAid’s Wildlife Campaigner Alex Hofford said, adding that blue sharks have also been listed on the United Nations Convention on Migratory Species.

Hofford said the restaurant have told the media they will “closely monitor new environmental factors and review their strategies responsibly,” and called on Maxim’s CEO Michael Wu to “take heed of the advice of the scientific community” and “remove blue sharks from all Maxim’s menus before Chinese New Year.”

Last December, the restaurant chain sponsored a responsible eating event to promote corporate social responsibility and sustainability.

Photo: WildAid.

Maxim's has said it "take[s] responsibility in sustainable sourcing while continuing to respond to our customers' changing preferences."

"We will also closely monitor new environmental factors, and review our strategies responsibly."

The post NGO says blue sharks face extinction as 'unscrupulous' Maxim's restaurant refuses to scrap shark fin soup appeared first on Hong Kong Free Press HKFP. Author: Karen Cheung.

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