

**For discussion on
19 July 2018**

Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs

**Latest Progress of the Protection of
Endangered Shark Species in Hong Kong**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the latest progress of the protection of endangered shark species in Hong Kong.

Existing control

2. The HKSAR Government is committed to protect endangered species and regulates the trade according to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) through the implementation of the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) (the Ordinance). The Ordinance is implemented by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), and jointly enforced by the AFCD and the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED). All import and export of controlled shark specimens¹ are regulated according to the provisions of CITES: including the import of controlled shark specimens must be accompanied with a valid CITES permit, which is issued only when the authorities of the exporting place ensures that the export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild and has met the requirements for sustainable capture. Such goods are inspected by authorized persons upon importation into Hong Kong. Re-exportation of CITES shark specimens must also be accompanied by a Licence to Re-export issued by the AFCD, and must be inspected by authorized persons before departure from Hong Kong. CITES does not prohibit the trade of species listed in Appendix II. Instead, it regulates the international trade of these species through the permit system in order to

¹ Currently, eight species of sharks are listed in Appendix II to CITES and specified under the Ordinance.

avoid over-consumption and threats to their survival. By implementing CITES regulations, the AFCD ensures that shark fins purchased in Hong Kong are caught through sustainable means.

Putting more shark species under regulation according to CITES

3. At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs on 28 May 2018, we mentioned that four more shark species² have been added to Appendix II to CITES at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In order to put these four shark species under local regulation, the Environment Bureau on 8 June 2018 published in the gazette the “Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Amendments of Schedules 1 and 3) Order 2018” and the “Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Exemption for Appendices II and III Species) (Amendment) Order 2018”, and tabled the Orders to the Legislative Council for negative vetting on 13 June 2018. The new regulation measures will commence operation on 1 November this year. The AFCD will issue circulars to wholesalers, retailers, shipping and logistics companies of shark products such as shark fins this July, and organize information seminars in the coming months to remind traders to observe the new regulation set out by CITES and the Ordinance. The AFCD has also produced a series of new promotional pamphlets and posters to enhance public awareness on the protection of endangered sharks species and other endangered species.

Stepping up law enforcement

4. The AFCD and the C&ED are working closely together to strengthen the investigation of illicit import and export of shark products. The two departments continue to conduct joint enforcement operations from time to time to inspect container cargo of shark fins from overseas to combat illegal import of controlled shark fins. In order to support future enforcement efforts, the AFCD has been organizing training courses to train front-line officers of the AFCD and C&ED to identify the shark species that are newly put under control. The AFCD and C&ED

² They are the Common Thresher Shark, Pelagic Thresher Shark, Bigeye Thresher Shark and Silky Shark.

will continue to work closely to combat illicit trade in endangered species.

Strengthening communications and cooperation

5. The Government places high importance on communicating and cooperating with key stakeholders with a view to attaining more comprehensive management and conservation of sharks at the global level. Relevant departments engage regularly in intelligence exchange with overseas and international bodies, such as the Interpol, to assist in combating global crime on wild animals and plants. In addition, the AFCD also regularly meets with conservation groups and traders to learn about their views on shark conservation and regulation. Recently, the AFCD also met with local and international conservation bodies to discuss ways to enhance the skills of law enforcement personnel in identifying shark fins. As mentioned in paragraph 3 above, the AFCD also plans to organize information seminars for traders on the inclusion of new shark species into regulation and other related measures.

Way forward

6. The 30th meeting of the CITES Animals Committee will be held in July 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland, while the 18th Conference of the Parties of CITES will take place in May next year in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The AFCD will send delegates to attend these meetings to closely follow the latest progress on management and conservation of sharks at the international level, and will amend the Ordinance in due course to complement with the latest decisions of CITES and local situation.

7. Members are invited to note the Government's latest progress in the protection of endangered shark species.

Environmental Protection Department
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