

Shark Finning

Costa Rican National Fishery Department (INCOPECSA) Defends New Regulation

Esteban Arrieta Arias

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earrieta@prensalibre.co.cr

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INCOPECSA officials rebutted criticisms made by the Ministry of the Environment (MINAE) and NGOs regarding a new INCOPECSA regulation that permits the capture of sharks in Costa Rican waters without permitting shark finning.

According to biologist and Chief Technical Director of INCOPECSA, Antonio Porras, "The new regulation administered by INCOPECSA will regulate this activity rather than leave it in the hands of God." The Ministry of the Environment and conservationists believe it will do the opposite.



New INCOPECSA regulation permits shark fishing in Costa Rican waters.

Shark finning consists of cutting the fins off sharks and throwing the bodies back into the sea, utilizing only the fins which are highly sought after in international markets. In Asian cultures shark fins are thought to have aphrodisiac properties and are used in various dishes and for cosmetic products.

According to Porras, the new regulation, which took effect at the beginning of November, "Guarantees the utilization of the entire animal, not merely a selective irresponsible use."

"Prior to passage of this regulation, fishermen were practically unregulated and controls were carried out in accordance with the officials of the MINAE and the resources available, while now, all fishing vessels are obligated to land their catch at Costa Rican ports and the Costa Rican Association of Professional Biologists and INCOPECSA guarantee that all sharks will be utilized in their entirety," said Porras.

According to the new regulation, only fishing vessels arriving with 499kg or more will be inspected with the objective of confiscating products that do not comply with the regulation.

“The market price for shark fins is much higher than the price paid for other parts of the shark, and due to this, fishermen discard the dead shark bodies into the sea, but now, fishermen are required to utilize the entire shark with the objective of increasing total profits of the fishing industry and avoiding the waste of a commercial product.”

Porras indicated that INCOPECSA hopes the Minister of the Environment, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, will call a meeting to declare his position regarding the new regulation.

Three weeks ago, conservation NGOs, MINAE officials and directors of INCOPECSA met to analyze the new regulation and listen to various opinions about the regulation.

Recently Rodríguez expressed, in the Prensa Libre, his concern because INCOPECSA had not presented its official position on the regulation. However, Porras indicated that there had been a misunderstanding and that INCOPECSA was waiting for an additional meeting to be called.

“The truth is I think there was a misunderstanding and we hope we will be called to another meeting,” said Porras. “We did not know that we had to contact MINAE.

“Regarding the new regulation, we are taking this case very seriously and we are fully ready to attend to any request of MINAE.”

Porras denied any possibility of nullifying the new regulation considering effect on the interests of hundreds of national fishermen.

“This activity represents the livelihood of many families on the central and north Pacific and we cannot play with their livelihoods. We are not contemplating a nullification.”