

**Question for written answer E-006413/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Maria do Céu Patrão Neves (PPE)

Subject: Adoption of the proposal to amend Council Regulation (EC) No 1185/2003 on the removal of the fins of sharks on board vessels

The adoption of the regulation on removing shark fins on board vessels is highly detrimental to the EU's surface longline fleet. It compromises future viability by reducing vessels' autonomy and imposing higher costs, and thereby reducing vessels' profits. As a result of the regulation, dozens of vessels will abandon the activity, resulting in job losses in a sector already weakened by the difficulties the fishing industry is facing in Europe. The sector estimates that vessel owners' profits have fallen by 50.2 %, which corresponds to an annual loss of EUR 14.24 million for the Iberian fleet.

In this dramatic context, Portugal and Spain have issued a joint declaration in which they criticise the adoption of the regulation and warn that it does not prevent 'finning' from being practised by third-country fleets, which are responsible for 93 % of shark catches. It is important to note that the ban on removing fins on board third-country fleets applies almost exclusively to the wet-fish fleet and not to the freezer fleet, which the EU fleet would also support. The EU fleet is responsible for only 7 % of shark catches, all of which are processed in their entirety, without practising 'finning'. These facts have never been denied by the EC, which has based its proposals on mere suspicion..

- Is the Commission aware that the competitiveness of the European sector will inevitably be affected by the imposition of measures on the EU fleet that are more restrictive than those in force around the world? What extra steps will it take to uphold the sustainability of the EU's longline fleet?
- Is the Commission aware of the global inefficacy of this ban on the removal of shark fins on board, which applies to only 7 % of the global fleet? How will it promote an effective ban on 'finning' around the world?
- Citing the need to protect sharks as justification for its proposal, the Commission has opted for the simplistic solution of banning the removal of fins on board. When will it opt for the more effective and scientifically rigorous solution of implementing a shark action plan that will allow data to be gathered on all species of sharks caught?