

## Mapping the Shark Value Chain in Ghana: Past Lessons, Present Challenges, and Future Opportunities

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Elasmobranch species, including sharks, skates, and rays, are caught as targeted species and bycatch in Ghana. Both the targeted and bycatch shark fisheries provide locally-consumed animal protein, and a source of income for artisanal fishermen. Artisanal fishermen harvest meat for the local market, while shark fins and other products are destined for the lucrative export market.

Since the 1980s, following China's "reform and opening-up" period, Shark fin consumption has grown astronomically. High demand for shark fin in China has left global shark populations in peril. Heightened media attention and substantial lobbying from conservation organizations and celebrities has pressured governments to regulate and, in some cases, ban shark fin trading and the gruesome practice of shark finning. These efforts, along with changing tastes among Chinese youth, have resulted in sharp declines in shark fin consumption.

However, a significant paucity in fisheries data, especially in the developing world, makes it difficult to assess the true extent of worldwide trade in shark products. On the Ghanaian national level, inadequate catch/landings data and socioeconomic data hampers the ability of the government to implement sustainable fisheries management policies. This data is also necessary for policymakers to determine the effects that the declining demand for shark fin and other products has had on artisanal fishermen.

Mapping the shark value chain is a first step in understanding who benefits from the shark fishery, how they benefit, and how policy interventions, at different levels of the supply chain, can ensure the sustainability of the shark fishery in Ghana. Using semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observation, I will collect key catch/landings data and socioeconomic data in Shama, Dixcove, and Takoradi.

My goal is to thoroughly understand the linkages between artisanal shark fishermen, buyers of shark meat and fins, processors, sellers, middlemen, exporters, and other players in the shark trade in Ghana. Understanding these linkages, and who benefits at different levels of the value chain, is imperative to crafting good fisheries management policies. Value chain analysis is critical to identifying areas of improvement in the infrastructure, regulations, and other factors impeding expansion of economic activities.