



November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016

## EVALUATION OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH ATLANTIC ~~BLUE SHARK AND~~ SWORDFISH LONGLINE FISHERY AGAINST THE MSC STANDARDS

### BLOOM'S CONTRIBUTION TO BUREAU VERITAS' PCDR

#### BACKGROUND

- In December 2014, the “North and South Atlantic blue shark and swordfish longline fishery” by the Spanish companies ORPAGU and CEPESCA entered the Marine Stewardship Council’s evaluation process. These companies chose Bureau Veritas as their certification assessment body.
- On May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016, Bureau Veritas modified the scope of the assessment in a shameless move, by re-categorizing blue sharks as simple "bycatch" instead of "target species".
- On October 19<sup>th</sup> 2016, Bureau Veritas released its Public Comment Draft Report, whose conclusion was that the fishery should be certified.

**Certifying this fishery would clearly be incompatible with the existing knowledge on its bycatch data, given that blue sharks still represent over two thirds of the total catch. Rebranding them as “bycatch” did not change this fact. Furthermore, other vulnerable species are also caught as bycatch, and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT; the regional fisheries management organization in charge of managing, among others, swordfish fisheries) has pointed out the historical lack of research programs and uncertainties around the estimates of swordfish catch rates.<sup>1</sup>**

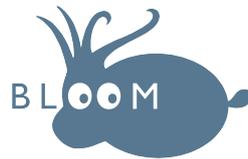
#### FROM “TARGET SPECIES” TO “BYCATCH”

During the early stages of the assessment process of the “North and South Atlantic blue shark and swordfish longline fishery”, Bureau Veritas received feedback and personal communications from 18 NGOs<sup>2</sup> and stakeholders. The main concerns expressed over the

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<sup>1</sup> Mejuto, *et al.* (2014) Preliminary standardized catch rates in number of fish by age for the South Atlantic swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) of the Spanish longline fleet, for the period 1989-2011 assuming a tentative growth model. Collect. Vol. Sci. Pap. ICCAT 70(4): 1826-1836.

<sup>2</sup> Shark Advocates International; Global Shark Conservation Initiative, Submon Serveis Ambientals Marins, ICBM Universität Oldenburg, Sharkman's World Organization, Lateral Line Shark Expeditions, Shark Savers Germany, Birdlife International, BlueShark Conservation (Belgium), Sharks Mission (France), Shark Citizen, Sharkproject, Shark Trust, Alianza por los tiburones de Canarias, Ocean Chronicles, BLOOM Association, Stop Finning and Project Aware



certification of this fishery were (see PCDR Vol.2):

- The global state of large predators;
- The IUCN status of blue sharks (i.e. "Near Threatened");
- The interaction of the fishery with other endangered, threatened or protected species (turtles, seabirds, marine mammals, sharks);
- The lack of catch limits for both blue shark and shortfin mako;
- The strong presence of juvenile blue shark and shortfin mako in areas where longliners are active;
- The lack of compliance with existing anti-finning legislations;
- The negative Atlantic swordfish stock assessment;

Instead of accounting for these comments, Bureau Veritas removed blue sharks from the “target species” category and started to consider them as a primary bycatch species. It rebranded the fishery as the “North and South Spanish longline swordfish fishery”. **This is a scam, given that blue sharks are *de facto* a targeted species.** It is by far the main commercial species caught in this fishery, accounting for 76% and 59% of its total catch in the North and South Atlantic, respectively, between 2010 and 2014 (p47-48 PCDR Vol.1).

### CERTIFYING THE CATCH OF THREATENED SPECIES?

All the main “bycatch” species (including blue sharks, which are actually targeted) caught by this fishery are classified as vulnerable or near threatened in the IUCN red list (around 20,000 t·year<sup>-1</sup>). The table below is based on the PCDR (pp 46-49).

Species	IUCN status	Total bycatch (t) of the Spanish longline fleet between, 2010-2014	
		North Atlantic	South Atlantic
Blue shark ( <i>Prionace glauca</i> )	Near threatened <sup>3</sup>	45,112	44,659
Yellowfin tuna ( <i>Thunnus albacares</i> )	Near threatened <sup>4</sup>	116	377
Albacore tuna ( <i>T. alalunga</i> )	Near threatened <sup>5</sup>	379	459
Atlantic blue Marlin ( <i>Makaira nigricans</i> )	Vulnerable <sup>6</sup>	85	153
Atlantic white marlin ( <i>Kajikia albida</i> )	Vulnerable <sup>7</sup>	1	2
Shortfin mako ( <i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> )	Vulnerable <sup>8</sup>	3,479	4,113
Longfin mako ( <i>I. paucus</i> )	Vulnerable <sup>9</sup>	26	0
		<b>49,198</b>	<b>49,763</b>

<sup>3</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39381/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39381/o)

<sup>4</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/21857/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/21857/o)

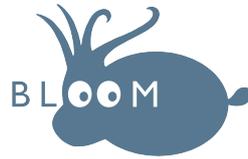
<sup>5</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/21856/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/21856/o)

<sup>6</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/170314/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/170314/o)

<sup>7</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/170322/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/170322/o)

<sup>8</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39341/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39341/o)

<sup>9</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/60225/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/60225/o)



This fishery also interacts with many other vulnerable species, for which no catch data are available:

- Silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) - Near threatened<sup>10</sup>
- Oceanic whitetip shark (*C. longimanus*) - Vulnerable<sup>11</sup>
- Porbeagle shark (*Lamna nasus*) - Vulnerable<sup>12</sup>
- Bigeye thresher shark (*Alopias superciliosus*) - Vulnerable<sup>13</sup>
- Common thresher Shark (*A. vulpinus*) - Vulnerable<sup>14</sup>
- Tiger shark (*Galeocerdo cuvier*) - Near threatened<sup>15</sup>
- Striped marlin (*Kajikia audax*) - Near threatened<sup>16</sup>
- Scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*) - Endangered<sup>17</sup>
- Great hammerhead (*S. mokarran*) - Endangered<sup>18</sup>
- Smooth hammerhead (*S. zygaena*) - Vulnerable<sup>19</sup>
- Crocodile shark (*Pseudocarcharias kamohara*) - Near threatened<sup>20</sup>

In addition, we note that the observer coverage only accounts for 1% (North Atlantic) to 3% (South Atlantic) of the fishing days (p44 PCDR Vol.1; PI 2.1.3 and 2.3.3). **This clearly is insufficient**, since researchers have estimated that the observer coverage should reach at least 20% to correctly estimate seabird bycatch, and 50% to detect catches of species that are rare, or that rarely interact with the fishery.<sup>21,22</sup>

## BLOOM'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the conservation status of both the main targeted species and bycatch species, and given the uncertainties raised by scientists about catch rates estimates and the observer coverage, **BLOOM can only recommend to not certify this fishery. We urge Bureau Veritas to reconsider the P1 and P2 scores attributed to the North and South Spanish longline swordfish fishery**, as certifying this fishery would jeopardize the rigorousness of an already weakened MSC.

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<sup>10</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39370/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39370/o)

<sup>11</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39374/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39374/o)

<sup>12</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/11200/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/11200/o)

<sup>13</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/161696/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/161696/o)

<sup>14</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39339/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39339/o)

<sup>15</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39378/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39378/o)

<sup>16</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/170309/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/170309/o)

<sup>17</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39385/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39385/o)

<sup>18</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39386/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39386/o)

<sup>19</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39388/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39388/o)

<sup>20</sup> [www.iucnredlist.org/details/39337/o](http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/39337/o)

<sup>21</sup> Debski, et al. (2016) Observer coverage to monitor seabird captures in pelagic longline fisheries. Scientific Committee Twelfth Regular Session Bali (Indonesia). 11 p.

<sup>22</sup> Gilman, et al. (2013) Performance of regional fisheries management organizations: ecosystem-based governance of bycatch and discards. Fish and Fisheries: 25.