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In Guinea Conakry, sharks are still exploited mainly by Ghanaian fishermen who have been migrating seasonally since the 1980ties to target sharks in Guinean waters. They were followed by Senegalese fishermen in the 1990ties when the demand for shark fins for the Asian market was growing. We present a description of these shark fishing activities including the socio-economic aspects, as at present the Guinean fishermen press for a reduction or complete halt of these fishing activities.

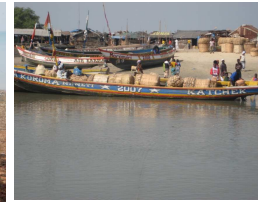
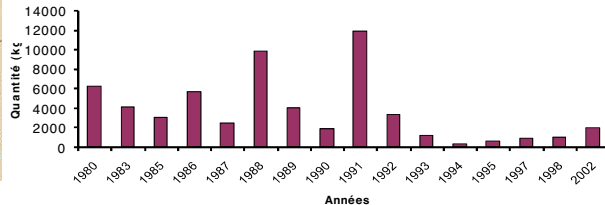
Fishing gears used to capture shark; status of shark populations and their abundance index in Guinea

Artisanal fisheries use mainly large meshed anchored-set gillnets with or without ice-box; drift gillnets for capturing bonqa shads; encircling gillnets for catching bonqa shads and otholits; fishing lines and long lines. The long lines and the encircling gillnets are most efficient for catching sharks, followed by the drift gillnets. In industrial fisheries, sharks are landed as bycatch of all in Guinea authorised licence types (pelagic, demersal, cephalopod, crustaceans).

The abundance index of rays and sharks was obtained from bycatches. The analysis of this graph shows a clear tendency towards decrease in shark capture from the abundance index point of view since the campaigns from 1991 to 2002. This can be explained by the greater exploitation of resources during the past ten years, by the increase of foreign fishermen specializing in shark fishing and on the other hand by the increase of industrial fishing fleets, that land important amounts of bycatch.

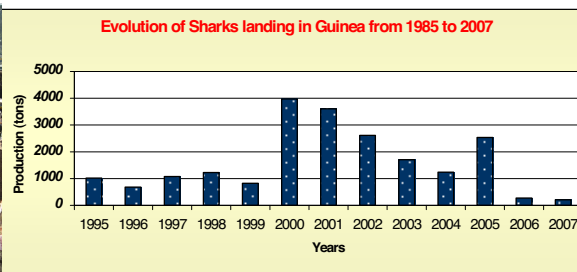


Evolution de l'indice d'abondance (kg/30 mn) des raies et requins dans la ZEE Guinéenne

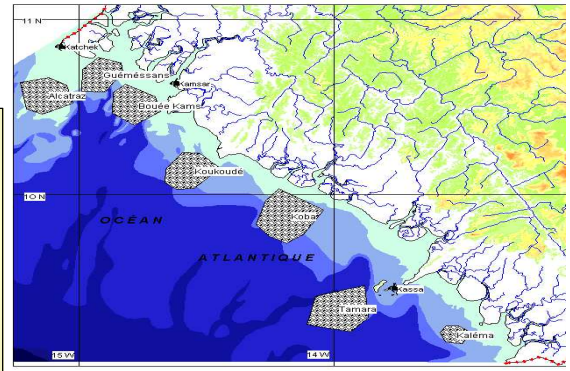


Development of shark landing in Guinea during the last twenty years

No specific technology for shark fishing existed in Guinea until 1990, the year in which shark fishing increased following the arrival of the foreign fishermen and the introduction of new technologies for shark fishing (new gears used aboard more powerful motorized boats - equipped with ice box). This is visible in the graph showing the shark capture development and the hereof resulting reduction of landings by size.

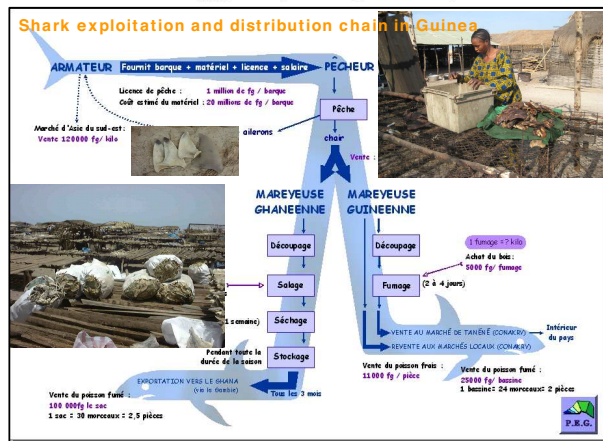


ZONES DE PÊCHE AUX REQUINS SUR LE LITTORAL GUINEENNE



Emerging markets and marketing of shark in Guinea

The sharks caught in Guinea are marketed in three ways: by the drying of fins, salt-drying and smoking. The product whose popularity explains the intensified shark fishing pressure is the shark fin. The fins of the captured shark are sliced off (finned) as soon as the shark lands aboard the boat and the remaining body is thrown back into the sea. The fins are sun dried on board without elaborate treatment. The fins collected on the coast of Guinea are shipped to Conakry before being processed and dispatched by air towards Southeast Asia (Hong Kong, Japan). Salting and drying is the most productive shark conservation technique (in terms of volume) and the most recent one in Guinea. The shark meat is generously salted at sea. After unloading, it is chunked, cleaned and salted again, before being exposed to the sun on raised and slightly eastwards tilted wooden trays. Smoking is practised exclusively by Guinean women. The meat is chunked before being cleaned and spread out on the smoking kiln, on which they are dried slowly for three days. The smoked products are delivered exclusively to the Guinean market, whereas the salt-dried products are exported to Ghana. Sometimes, the sharks' jaws are recovered to make ornaments.



Some of the main species of rays and sharks landing in Guinean waters

There is a great diversity of rays and sharks (40). Some of the most abundant species are presented in these illustrations.



Conclusion and prospects

According to the information collected by the PSRA-Requins project, there appears to be an increase in the fishing effort as well as in artisanal fishing and in industrial fishing. The local population expressed an interest in reducing or temporary banning the shark fishing - now practiced annual, formerly seasonal. It was noted an absence of sustainable management policy of ray and shark populations in Guinea before the arrival of PSRA-Requins. This country has now adopted its National Action plan for the conservation and sustainable management of sharks, which lies within the scope of the PSRA-Requins in the Sub Regional Fishery Commission countries. Despite the high export rate of shark products in Guinea, a trading ban of endangered species (as listed on the IUCN Red list) was enforced.

Acknowledgment

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