



FACTSHEET

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REDUCING THE MORTALITY OF MARINE TURTLES:

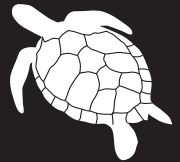
THE NEED FOR TURTLE EXCLUDER DEVICE LEGISLATION IN EUROPE

Impact of wild-caught shrimps for EU market on world's marine turtles

THE PROBLEM

It has long been recognized that trawl fisheries have significant unintended negative impacts on both species and habitats. Tropical Shrimp Trawling (TST) is a fishing method that involves towing or pushing a net through water to catch tropical shrimp, though fish and other species can also form an important part of the catch. In the absence of appropriate technical and management measures it can be highly indiscriminate, resulting in the capture of large quantities of marine fauna additional to that which the fishers are targeting.¹ Tropical shrimp trawlers in the tropical regions of the world are especially problematic for marine turtles, as they are often incidentally caught as 'bycatch' due to the habitat they share with the targeted shrimp. This is one of the major threats to marine turtles, as they get caught in fishing gear and drown. Marine turtles are especially vulnerable to anthropogenic impacts, six of the seven marine turtle species are categorized as vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered on the IUCN Red List are listed in Appendix I of CITES. Worldwide, bycatch alone is estimated to result in hundreds of thousands of deaths each year, a problem that can be greatly reduced by using TEDs.

Bycatch is the major threat to marine turtles worldwide, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths every year.



Six of the seven species of marine turtles are categorized as vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered on the IUCN Red List and are listed in Appendix I of CITES. The European Union, the main importer of shrimp in the world, does not yet require Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in the tropical shrimp fisheries from which they import, providing an alternative market for countries that do not use TEDs.

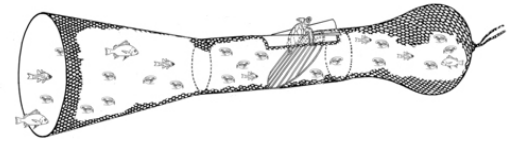
WWF submitted a motion to the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2021 highlighting the crucial need of adopting import regulations requiring effective turtle bycatch mitigation measures for all countries exporting wild-caught tropical shrimp to the European market, which was approved in November 2020.

¹ R. Davies (2016). Wild-caught tropical shrimp imports into the EU and associated impacts on marine turtle populations: the need for EU import restrictions. CRPMEG Guyane, 94p.

THE SOLUTION: TURTLE EXCLUDER DEVICES

A Turtle Excluder Device or TED is a grid that fits into a trawl net whereby the spacing of the bars and angle of the grid are designed to allow shrimps to pass through to the back of the trawl net (or 'cod-end'), while diverting marine turtles and other large marine fauna through an escape hatch.²

TEDs exclude at least 97% of the turtles with minimal loss of target catch (less than 2%)³, whilst increasing the productivity of trawling operations by reducing damage to nets, reducing the crushing of the catch, reducing fuel costs and creating higher market prices for better quality shrimp.⁴

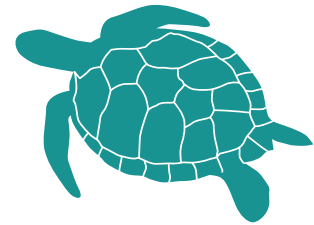


TED Illustration, Ifremer

REGULATIONS KEEP TURTLES OUT OF TRAWL NETS

Regulatory measures are critical to implement TED usage. TEDs are being increasingly used and required in a growing number of shrimp trawl fisheries worldwide, and their use is enforced by many governments:

- A legislation prohibiting the importation of shrimp harvested in a manner which may adversely affect marine turtles has been in place in the United States since 1989 (Section 609 of the United States Public Law 101-162, also known as the US shrimp/turtle law). American fleets are required by US federal law to use TEDs, and foreign fleets wishing to export wild-caught shrimp to the US must demonstrate that they are not incidentally capturing marine turtles. More than 40 shrimp-exporting countries now meet the requirements of US shrimp/turtle law.
- French Guiana is the only European territory with tropical shrimp trawl fisheries that implement TEDs. It does not export shrimp to the US but meeting the requirements of US shrimp/turtle law allows the industry to receive technical support from U.S. shrimp fishing gear experts. These tools were introduced through a collaboration with WWF to reduce marine turtle mortality and were adopted voluntarily by local fishers who brought the issue to the attention of the French national fisheries administration for its mandatory implementation. This has led to France, with the support of French Guiana Regional Fisheries Committee together with WWF to officially request that the European Union develop a TED implementation strategy.⁵ for TST fisheries that export to the European market.



“BYCATCH IS THE MAJOR THREAT TO MARINE TURTLES WORLDWIDE, RESULTING IN HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DEATHS EVERY YEAR.”

² R. Davies (2016). Wild-caught tropical shrimp imports into the EU and associated impacts on marine turtle populations: the need for EU import restrictions. CRPMEM Guyane, 94p.

³ S. Eayrs (2007). A Guide to Bycatch Reduction in Tropical Shrimp Trawl Fisheries. Revised Edition. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Rome: FAO, 108.

⁴ R. Gillett (2008) "Global study of shrimp fisheries." Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Rome, 331.

⁵ "Why Europe needs to adopt Turtle Excluder Devices" SWOT report, Vol. XIII, pp 38-39 (<https://www.seaturtlestatus.org/swot-report-13>) (2018)



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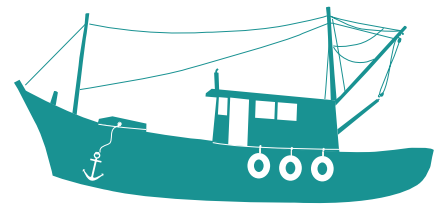
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TURTLES PAY WITH THEIR LIVES FOR EU TROPICAL SHRIMP IMPORTS

The EU is the back-door market for unsustainable shrimp. Of the countries that export wild-caught shrimp to the EU but are not certified to export wild-caught shrimp to the United States, at least six countries have been identified as not using TEDs in their trawls, leading to the bycatch of tens of thousands of turtles a year: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Thailand, and Vietnam. All of these countries, except for Vietnam, have national regulations requiring TEDs, yet they do not enforce their laws.⁶

Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are the main European countries that receive shrimp exports from the six tropical export countries that are not certified to export wild-caught shrimp to the United States. Although the EU has already made important progress toward creating a more sustainable fishing industry in its waters and abroad, Europe could potentially save tens of thousands of marine turtles every year. However, **Europe, which is the largest market for fisheries products and the main importer of shrimp in the world⁷, has no such regulation and provides an alternative market for countries that do not use TEDs.**

It is urgent for the EU to ensure that effective mitigation measures to reduce marine turtle bycatch are adopted by countries exporting tropical trawl-caught shrimp into the European Union. The need to strengthen EU action is related to the EU's current obligations under the various national, international and multilateral environmental treaties to which it is party⁸, the various sustainability guidelines it has endorsed, and within the context of its existing regulations. **Additional measures are needed to address turtle bycatch, as failure to do so will mean the EU is potentially complicit in activities that conflict with its conservation obligations.**



“EUROPE IS THE LARGEST MARKET FOR FISHERIES PRODUCTS AND THE MAIN IMPORTER OF SHRIMP IN THE WORLD. IT IS TIME FOR THE EU TO ENSURE THAT EFFECTIVE MITIGATION MEASURES TO REDUCE MARINE TURTLE BYCATCH ARE ADOPTED BY COUNTRIES EXPORTING TROPICAL TRAWL-CAUGHT SHRIMP INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION.”

6 R. Davies (2016). Wild-caught tropical shrimp imports into the EU and associated impacts on marine turtle populations: the need for EU import restrictions. CRP MEM Guyane, 94p.

7 FAO, 2018

8 Among these being the Sustainable Development Goals (eg. Target 14.4 “By 2020 ... end ... destructive fishing practices”), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) resolution 9.18 on Bycatch, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) article 8, CITES app. I, UNCLOS, UNFSA, etc.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. The EU** should adopt measures similar in nature and intent to those of the US (i.e. Section 609 of Public Law 101-162) to ensure that wild-caught tropical shrimp exported into the EU are not implicated in marine turtle bycatch.
- 2. EU stakeholders**, especially those in the main EU countries importing tropical trawl-caught shrimp should work with exporting countries to help implement effective turtle bycatch mitigation measures. Ideally, this would be through the establishment (or continuation) of collaborative fisheries research programmes with the fishing industry to find optimum mitigation measures for a particular fishery and subsequent best-practice implementation. To this end, a number of specific actions could be taken, such as:
 - a.** Efforts to ensure EU retailers and consumers source from turtle-free fisheries.
 - b.** EU aid to support fisheries research programmes designed specifically to tackle this issue.
- 3. Relevant seafood markets** should consider interim voluntary measures to identify sustainable shrimp sources. For example, shrimp from countries that meet the US import requirement, or that comes from other certified sources should be prioritized.
- 4. EU consumers, retailers, and country governments** collectively demand action to the European Commission to reduce marine turtle bycatch.
- 5. The potential for the EU / IUU regulation to ban imports from countries that are not adhering to their own national regulations should be considered as a key part of any strategy.** Of the six focal countries in this study, only Viet Nam does not have a TED regulation, yet effective compliance with the national TED regulations existing within the other five countries is doubtful. Efforts must therefore focus on working with these countries to better comply with those regulations, with the EU in parallel seeking for more conclusive evidence of effective compliance as part of gaining the catch certification necessary to export to the EU.

TRAWLING VS TURTLES:

The impact of wild-caught shrimp for EU market on world's marine turtles

- Hundreds of thousands marine turtles – worldwide, the number of turtles bycaught per year
- 97% of turtle bycatch – is reduced when using a properly installed TED in a tropical shrimp trawl
- At least 6 tropical countries – export to the EU but do not use TEDs in their trawls
- 1989 – the year since TEDs have been required from tropical shrimp trawling countries that export to the US



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