All for a Bowl of Soup

A Study of the Illegal Shark Fin Trade
In Costa Rica

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General Issue

• Shark Fin soup historically only enjoyed by the elite.

• Growing Chinese middle-class in the late 1980s.

• Shark-rich waters and lack of laws in Costa Rica
A food web displaying the connections between primary producers (phytoplankton) and consumers of increasing trophic levels (zooplankton – top predators).

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Literature Review

• Environmental Sustainability Theories
  – Democracy
  – Equality of Sexes
  – Individualism

• What about the role of:
  – Corruption?
  – Governmental Agencies?
  – Monitoring Illegal Natural Resource Use?
Why is the practice of shark finning so prevalent in Costa Rica?

• **Hypothesis One**: Shark finning is so prevalent in Costa Rica because enforcement personnel are corrupt and accept bribes instead of enforcing the law.

• **Hypothesis Two**: Shark finning is so prevalent in Costa Rica because government agencies, such as INCOPESCA, in charge of inspecting vessels’ cargo, protecting marine reserves, etc. lack the resources necessary to effectively enforce the law.
Role of INCOPESCA

- Manages all Costa Rican fisheries
  - Licensing fishermen
  - Subsidies
  - Research
  - Commercialization of fish products
  - Enforcing Law 8436: Fishing and Aquaculture Law
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- Two Major Regulations Pertaining to Shark Fishing
  - Sharks must be landed with their fins *naturally* attached
  - Foreign fishing vessels must be inspected at a public dock before continuing to private dock
Lack of Resources

Creation of INCOFESCA in 1994

• Only 3 Inspectors in Puntarenas
  – “[We]examine only 20% of the 30 to 50 foreign vessels unloading in port every month” - Ana Sales, chief inspector, 2003.
Lack of Resources

• No scale to weight cargos

• Vessels were expected to ask for an inspection and then pay inspector costs

• Funded US$900,000 but has US$2 million annual expenses
Corruption

Board of Directors Ties to Fishing Sector
Conclusion