

Hong Kong airline Cathay Pacific announces shark fin ban

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Animal rights campaigners have been calling on Cathay to introduce a shark fin carriage ban for years

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Hong Kong-based airline Cathay Pacific has announced a ban on shipments of shark fin in a move that has been welcomed by conservationists.

Cathay is one of the world's biggest cargo airlines, and its decision is expected to have a sizeable impact.

Previously, the airline had said it would only transport shark fin that was sustainably sourced.

Shark fin is considered a delicacy in Chinese cuisine and is often served as a soup at upmarket banquets.

More than 70 million sharks are killed every year, according to WWF figures. Large numbers are exported to Hong Kong, where they are consumed or further exported to mainland China.



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"On the issue of shark's fin, with immediate effect we are happy to agree to ban the carriage," Cathay Pacific **said in a statement on Wednesday.**

It said it had not approved any shark fin shipments over the last year, pointing out that it had turned down 15 shipment requests for shark-related products.

Early reports said the ban extended to all shark products on cargo and passenger flights, but the airline told the BBC it currently applied to shark fin only,

Cathay said it would continue to review its policy.

Marine conservationists hailed Cathay's decision, with one proclaiming that it would make Hong Kong "proud".

"More Hong Kong businesses need to follow the lead," Hong Kong-based conservationist Sharon Kwok told AFP.

Government data cited by the South China Morning Post shows that shark fin imports to Hong Kong dropped by 42% between 2010 and 2015 to 5,717 tonnes.



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During this period there was also a significant decline in imports by air.

Cathay now joins airlines including British Airways, American Airlines, Qantas, Singapore Airlines and Emirates in banning shark fin.

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