



agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, MR SENZENI ZOKWANA AT THE MEDIA BRIEFING ON FISHERIES HELD TODAY, 09 APRIL 2019 AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL IN OR TAMBO AIRPORT

Our country, in the past few years, has evolved as a critical player in the international bodies within the fisheries sector. We are no more a spectator country in the business of ocean and fisheries economy. The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, in accordance with Section 231(2&5) of the Constitution, approved South Africa's participation as a Contracting Party Member to three tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) namely; the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT); the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT); and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) including one Antarctic Treaty, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

These aforesaid are responsible for the management and conservation of tuna and tuna-like species in the Atlantic, Indian and Southern Oceans, as well as the Mediterranean Sea. The management activities include collating fisheries data, coordinating research & stock assessments, establishing management and conservation measures and issuing country quotas.

Without exception, there is an obligation to all contracting Party Members to adhere to all the Management and Conservation Measures of the RFMOs as stipulated in the respective Rules of Procedure as well as Conventions. In addition, all members, including South Africa are obligated to attend and participate in all the meetings.

Failure to attend the meetings severely disadvantages Member States in negotiations, and allocation of fishing possibilities. Non-compliance can have severe consequences for the country and the fishing industry.

Fisheries Management remains a one of the complex sectors given the challenges of the need to provide fair access to all in the ever shrinking resource, while having to balance the conservation of such stocks for future generations- this becomes a constant balancing act which often leads to unbalanced negative reporting.

In the world of tuna management, South Africa has quickly emerged as a leading light and a role model looked up to by many developing nations that are participating in these RFMOs. The DAFF team that constitutes South Africa's Delegation at RFMO meetings only consists of a handful of officials and is dwarfed by the large delegations of first world fishing nations like the United States, the European Union or Japan, yet South Africa has not only improved and achieved a clean slate in terms of their compliance with adopted conservation management measures and reporting requirements, but also makes a significant contribution to the scientific investigations and management of tuna and other large pelagic species.

No less than 20 papers and presentations were prepared and delivered by South African Fisheries Scientists this year, an unprecedented contribution which was specifically acknowledged during the meeting of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) of ICCAT and later at the ICCAT Annual Commission meetings.

Dr Henning Winker, a DAFF- Fisheries scientists developed a stock assessment tool, called 'Just Another Bayesian Biomass Assessment', (JABBA) originally developed for assessments of the South African line fishery, JABBA is more flexible and has since been included in the assessment toolbox of ICCAT since 2017. Dr Winker is currently in Spain where this tool will be officially launched and better suited to assess stocks with dis-aggregated, partially incomplete data.

Furthermore, real world information on the biology of the species can be incorporated more objectively.

From being a mere spectator a few years ago, South Africa is now well respected as member of the tuna RFMOs and well placed to hold to account the more dominant first world, distant water fleets in terms of their often detrimental and un-sustainable fishing practices with regard to by-catch and fishing around artificial Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs). South Africa is gaining influence and starts to increase pressure on countries that fish unsustainably.

South Africa's strategy –improvement of its own allocation were possible with concurrent recovery of the stocks- was successful and our fishery will be able to reap the benefits of the increasing number of fishes in our waters in the years to come. During highly tactical and shrewd negotiations led by the DAFF team, South Africa's allocation of Southern Bluefin tuna, one of the world's most valuable marine fish species increased from, from 150 t to 450 t until 2020. At the 2017 ICCAT's 25th Regular meeting of the Commission, South Africa retained its revised allocations for Albacore (5500 t and possibility of additional transfer) and for Southern Atlantic swordfish (1001 t).

Currently, South Africa together with the G-16 of like-minded coastal developing states of the Indian Ocean is leading a proposal to develop a system of allocation for IOTC species. The proposal aims to ensure that a fair, equitable, and transparent system of allocation of fishing opportunities is developed, while taking into account the sovereign rights of IOTC coastal States, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This proposal we envisage will be adopted during the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission meeting in June 2019.

The groundwork has been done by a small but effective team of Scientists and Managers from the Department, who have worked tirelessly to ensure that South Africa's engagement at the tuna RFMOs achieves tangible results.

Unlike in the inshore fisheries, which are severely oversubscribed in South Africa, the domestic tuna quotas remain largely underutilised. Moreover, large parts of the stocks of Southern Bluefin, Bigeye and Yellowfin tuna are fished by Distant Water Fishing Nations right outside (and possibly sometimes illegally inside) South Africa's EEZ. The value of the fish right on South Africa's 'stoep' is close to a Billion Rand and South Africa, with its excellent infrastructure is well placed to net increased benefits from this resource to alleviate the pressure on its nearshore resources. The net has been cast, now it is time to start the long haul.

These achievements require adequate recognition and acknowledgement of the sterling performance of the Department in the internationally managed tuna fisheries.

ACHIEVEMENTS ON SMALL SCALE FISHERIES -BALOBI APP

The Marine Living Resources Act which governs the management of the marine living resources in South Africa was amended in 2016, in order to address access for fishing communities who, for years were denied to participate and make a living in the ocean adjacent to where they reside.

While the amendment of the Act dealt with access, the challenges of infrastructure, and access to markets remained a challenge that needed an innovative thinking and decisive action by government. I am proud and encouraged by the work done by the ABALOBI PBO with the involvement of our own official who is the current Director for small-scale fisheries sector of the DAFF. He, together with other three co-founders of the ABALOBI PBO stepped into the gap.

I then announced this revolutionary programme ABALOBI initiative as far back as 2015 during the World Fisheries Day celebrations.

The ABALOBI programme is an empowerment tool for small-scale fishers whereby they use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to engage in a range of activities that enable them to participate fully, equitably and effectively in the fishing value chain. This initiative consists of a series of mobile applications, and aims to ensure equitable beneficiation through participation in a fully traceable, fair and inclusive value chain that secures equitable and sustainable seafood from "hook to cook", i.e. Seafood with a social and ecological story.

What becomes more important to me is the fact that small-scale fishers are currently in the process of realizing their full benefit and claiming their space in the value chain from “hook to cook”. Through ABALOBI’s pilot sites in 5 fishing communities in the Western Cape, with over 200 fishers participating, it has become clear that the ABALOBI app is impactful and gives dignity to fishers whose livelihood is fishing. Currently, there are over 120 top restaurants sourcing a diversity fish directly from small-scale fishers through the ABALOBI MARKETPLACE app. This has significantly cut out middlemen and significantly increased a fairer price for fish sold by small-scale fishers.

For the first time, a patron can order a seafood meal in a well-established restaurant and be able to trace who caught the fish, how was it caught, when was it caught and be able to link directly with the fisher who caught the fish in your plate through a simple QR code scan that comes with your meal. That is what we mean by a storied fish.

One can even send a text message to the fisher or fisher family and connect with them. This is about recognizing small-scale fishers who have sincere connection with their ocean and its life. This innovation creates consciousness about how ‘socially fair’ and ‘ecologically responsible’ go hand-in-hand in the context of small-scale fisheries, and our efforts to achieve sustainability.

Therefore, I as the Minister responsible for South Africa’s fisheries encourage the South African public to rally behind small-scale fisheries sector and support the initiative of ABALOBI by knowing the story behind the fish you eat and empower small-scale fishers with ABALOBI app.

We are already in the era of the 4th Industrial revolution where technology has taken over to make life easier. Digital platforms must be embraced by government. The ABALOBI app initiative is directly in line with the current establishment of the small-scale fisheries sector with about 11000 small-scale fishers from the four coastal provinces of our country. It is therefore very important for my department to fully partner with the ABALOBI PBO and use the ABALOBI innovation as an integral part in developing and supporting small-scale fishers of South Africa and further influence small-scale fishers beyond the boundaries of South Africa.

Therefore, the department will soon be signing yet another strategic partnership agreement with ABALOBI PBO for rolling out ABALOBI throughout the small-scale fishing sector.

I am proud that we have started to introduce small scale fisheries in our Coastal provinces which will see massive jobs creation while at the same time building a new

economic players within the fisheries sector. We will continue to drive transformation and diversification within the sector bringing those who were previously disadvantaged as critical players.

Aquaculture Key Highlights & Successes over the Last Five Years

Since the launch of Operation Phakisa: Oceans Economy in 2014, the department (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) as the lead on aquaculture development, has made some progress on implementation of key initiatives that I will outline.

The number of Operation Phakisa projects has increased from 24 to 35. These projects have committed to increase production in the sector from 5000 to 25 000 tons, create over 3000 additional jobs and increase GDP contribution by over R 1 billion per annum.

The department continued to support the implementation of Operation Phakisa projects with on-going monitoring and reporting. In the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape, the department is looking at establishing multispecies hatcheries that will support community based aquaculture farms, stock enhancement and skills development. The hatchery will supply seed, fingerlings and provide training for the local community. To promote transformation of the sector and to ensure support for small scale and rural aquaculture enterprises, DAFF is developing a small scale aquaculture model and transformation strategy. To create an enabling environment, DAFF is implementing Aquaculture Development Zones (ADZs).

These are areas earmarked for aquaculture value chain activities with all the relevant authorisations in place and relevant basic infrastructure in order to reduce the cost of doing business. All the authorisations were received for Saldanha Bay (Western Cape), Qolora (Eastern Cape) and Coega (Eastern Cape) ADZs. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Amatikulu (KwaZulu Natal) and Algoa Bay (Eastern Cape) ADZ's are still underway. The department in partnership with provincial departments are piloting aquaculture in the Van der Kloof Dam (Northern Cape), Nandoni Dam (Limpopo), Disaneng (North West) and Richard's Bay (KwaZulu Natal).

In order to create an enabling legislative environment to promote sustainable aquaculture sector growth, the first dedicated aquaculture legislation, the Aquaculture Development Bill, was developed to address the current fragmented regulations and red tape.

The Bill has gone through all relevant processes and public participation; was approved by our Cabinet on 9 May 2018 and introduced to Parliament on 15 June 2018 where it will undergo parliamentary processes.

The Department has also commenced with the process of developing a 'National Freshwater (Inland) Wild Capture Fisheries' policy which seeks to create an efficient regulatory regime for the inland fisheries sector that will promote sustainable growth and transformation of the sector. The first round of public consultations was undertaken during July 2018, currently intergovernmental consultations are underway and the department will undertake a second round of public consultations during July 2019.

In collaboration with relevant departments, the DAFF has established the Interdepartmental Authorisations Committee, reducing timeframes of approvals from the initial period of over two (2) years to eight (8) months – one (1) year timeframe. In collaboration with Transnet National Ports Authority, over 422 hectares of water space long term leases have been approved for aquaculture development.

To facilitate funding in the sector, the Aquaculture Development Fund 'funding model' was developed. The funding of aquaculture has been prioritised with relevant Development Funding Institutions (DFIs) through the establishment of a working group led by DAFF to ensure end-to-end funding and to promote new entrants into the sector. The first local Aquaculture Finance and Investment Seminar was successfully held in March 2019. Several investment missions for aquaculture (inbound and outbound) were attended and hosted.

Aquaculture requires critical skills and knowledge to ensure sustainability and profitability. In this regard, the department has entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with Stirling University to train and address local scarce skills in fish health. To date five (5) provincial veterinarians have completed one year of training and three (3) more are currently undergoing training. The development and approval of the aquaculture farmer qualifications framework was completed in partnership with AgriSETA. Since the Gariiep Aquaculture Training Centre was officially handed over to South Africa in June 2017; 236 potential farmers and government officials were trained and the aim is to broaden it to SADC countries.

South Africa's fish consumption is comparably low at around 8kg per person per annum versus the global average of 19kg per person per annum. In order to increase the consumption of fish locally, we will be embarking on a marketing and awareness programme nationally. The department successfully hosted the World Aquaculture Conference 2017, the first host country on the African continent.

Aquaculture remains on a positive growth trajectory and our government is committed to support the growth of this sector in order to supplement the deficit that currently exists with regards to current and future fish products demand. In order to positively contribute towards the development of our country, aquaculture seeks to continue enhancing food and nutrition security; job opportunities; economic growth and rural development.

Lastly, on the matter relating to the allegations on the capacity of the Department on the vessels for compliance and research, I want to assure the public that we have taken all possible measures, to ensure that the work does not come to grinding halt.

As I speak, the Africana is currently at sea conducting her routine work on research and today the Ellen Khuzwayo vessel will set sail. Despite the funding challenges we have undertaken to prioritize this work given its importance. Furthermore, we have engaged both the National Treasury to explore alternative funding models. Going forward, the fishing industry itself has shown commitments to partner with government to develop a long-lasting solution for our fleets.

These challenges are historic given that these vessels in 2013 were not operational and were docked for a very long time, resulting to the Department having to spend a significant part of its budget to repair and replace a number of that were faulty. This we achieved in partnership with SAAMSA that manages the vessels.

As a Minister I am proud about the strides we have made as government within the fisheries sector. The path we have started will put us on a higher plane in creating more opportunities for our people.

THANK YOU

ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES

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