

# All 2013 fishing rights appeals processed

PRETORIA: The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has managed to process all the 2013 fishing rights appeals, Minister Senzeni Zokwana announced on Monday. A total of 928 appeals have been processed from June 2015. An advisory team, appointed by the Minister, has worked tirelessly to this end.



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All the appeals were considered and evaluated in the seven fishing sectors - except for line fish as the settlement out of court had to be sorted out. It is expected to be finalised next year.

## New fishing rights allocations to be rolled out

The Minister explained that the finalisation of the appeals from the allocation of 2013 was critical as the department was currently rolling out the new allocations. "Ten fishing sectors, whose rights expire from 28 February 2015 until 31 December 2015 are now due for allocation," he said, adding that the fishing sectors that are now due for the allocation of fishing rights were allocated rights for a period of ten years in the year 2005.

He explained that when he assumed office in May 2014, the department had not yet started the process to allocate new fishing rights despite the fact it was known that they will expire in 2015. "This was of great concern as the delays could justify the extension that only benefits those who already have the rights, while others having waited for 10 years are made to wait even longer. We could not continue to subject the people to such injustice."

The Minister, therefore, decided to exempt the current right holders in order to extend their rights for a period of 12 months while the department put in place credible processes for the allocations. The new date of expiry of all the rights was approved to be 29 February 2016. This expiry date is only for sectors that were allocated rights in 2005, expiring in 2015.

## Expanding fishery under consideration

The 2013 fishing rights appeals were lodged by the KwaZulu-Natal Prawn, Trawl Fishery, Shark Demersal Fishery, Tuna-Pole, Oyster Fishery, White Mussel Fishery, Squid, Hake Handline and Traditional Line Fish Appeals.

Given that between 2006 and 2013, 742 hake handline crew have never been able to harvest more than 2,500 tons of hake in any one season, the Minister said he will be considering the viability of expanding this fishery by accommodating an additional 700 crew rights reserved exclusively for small-scale fishers, particularly fishers that crew squid boats and who are domiciled in the Southern and Eastern Cape.

"The intention of this expanded fishery will be to ensure that these squid fishing crew may continue harvesting fish and earning an income during the squid closed seasons or when squid fishing vessels are not operating," Zokwana said. The decision whether to expand this fishery or not will be taken by the Minister once the results of the socio-economic and scientific studies have been completed and the data analysed.

## **Transforming the fishing industry**

Minister Zokwana assured that the department had dealt with the appeals in a most fair and transparent manner. "We rose above all the challenges and constraints and stand ready and open to scrutiny because I believe that will help us improve going forward," he said.

Government was on the right track in overhauling the rights allocation system and transforming the fishing industry. "I am sure that we are on the right direction to speed up and truly uplift the fishers from the long history of abuse they have been subjected to for so many years."

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