

# Minister sets new allowable catch for abalone

After the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) announced the total allowable catch (TAC) of 50,5 tonnes determined for the 2018/2019 abalone fishing season, the minister received an appeal lodged by the abalone commercial rights holders and abalone zonal representatives in terms of section 80 of the Marine Living Resources Act of 1998.



Image via [AgriOrbit](#)

Some of the reasons stated in the appeal included lack of proper consultation by the department in the process of determining the TAC; the determination that the TAC was not based on any scientific and biological surveys to determine stock abundance as per the norms of TAC determination in the sector; socio-economic implications in the reduction of the TAC; and the need for DAFF to take the lead in fighting poaching given the fact that TAC reduction may result in increased poaching.

The abalone commercial rights holders and the abalone zonal representatives requested that the minister, as the appellant authority, implement an alternative and viable fishery management strategy and set aside the decision of the delegated authority to determine the TAC of 50,5 tonnes for the 2018/2019 fishing season.

The minister acknowledged that the abalone sector needed a complete overhaul of this fishery management in the form of meaningful interventions from the government in partnership with the South African public. There is a need for a comprehensive and impactful approach to better manage the abalone sector which is under threat and yet very important to the livelihood of fishing communities.

The department has engaged with various role players and interested parties about the best possible way to address issues affecting the abalone sector. The minister said a new and comprehensive approach required action which included rooting out corruption in DAFF and ensuring that officials are fit to hold office and capable of fighting the scourge of poaching.

There is a need to address poaching through an informed and realistic strategy, by involving interested and affected parties such as the abalone divers, small-scale fishers, abalone aquaculture farms and the public.

The department's scientific methodology should be re-examined and should balance with socio-economic aspects of the sector as a basis for important decisions such as the TAC determination.

The minister said there was a need to move away from decisions that would imply that the department is punishing the abalone rights holders by cutting the TAC due to increased poaching by those operating outside of the law.

The rights allocation approach in the abalone sector should be reconsidered where abalone rights would be allocated to the small-scale fishing sector in communities adjacent to the abalone fishing grounds. This would promote a sense of ownership and accountability from small-scale fishing communities and address the matter of exclusion and participation.

The minister wanted commitment from abalone aquaculture farms to work with the government to supply abalone spats to reseed abalone zones for the purpose of stock enhancement.

After having carefully considered the appeal the minister made the decision to set aside the delegated authority's decision to determine the TAC at 50,5 tons. He determined the TAC at 96 tons for the 2018/2019 fishing season, making it the same as that of the previous fishing season. The 2018/2019 fishing season will commence from the date of the minister's signing the record of decision letter and will be valid for nine months, which is the number of months of the normal abalone fishing season.

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