

South Africa

A novel pragmatism

South Africa's fledgling fisheries policy seeks to create a pragmatic means of retaining industrial and economic stability in the industry

Thank you very much for your constructive and comprehensive comments on my department's White Paper on Marine Fisheries. It is always valuable to read about the experiences elsewhere in the world and to try to apply them to one's own situation. I will, of course, bear your comments in mind (as well as the comments currently being made by many of my countrymen) when our new Marine Resources Bill and its associated regulative legislation is debated later this year.

At the outset, I must point out that South Africa's fisheries are mature and, in contrast to the situation in many other parts of the world, in a relatively healthy state. More than 26,000 people currently depend directly on the fishing industry for their livelihood. Such people would not, I am sure, be pleased if I were to support a mechanism which simply replaces their livelihood with a livelihood for others. It is on that premise that the drafters of the White Paper have come up with what I consider to be a pragmatic means of retaining industrial and economic stability in the industry while affording, through the establishment of novel new schemes, a means whereby those previously marginalized can obtain a real and meaningful stake. I am sure the accent on creation of more small- and medium-sized enterprises in the policy objectives has not escaped your notice,

I would not normally respond to all your suggestions in detail, but as you have highlighted eight clear concerns, perhaps you will allow me to comment briefly on them.

The definitions of 'artisanal', 'subsistence', 'traditional' and indeed other forms of fishing such as 'recreational' and 'commercial' are

clearly stated. Individual interpretation of the meanings of such terms can vary, but I am certainly clear in my mind what is meant. Given that fact, your link between an artisanal way of life, subsistence and poaching is difficult to comprehend. The current poaching of abalone and rock lobster is systematically removing the livelihoods of many for what can only be short-term gain. There will be no future fishing industry at all if people take the law into their own hands just at the time when we are trying to put at rest the inequities of the past.

I do not agree with your sentiments about the inadvisability of charging fees for the use of a resource. Fisheries management is an expensive process and it is appropriate that users pay for the privilege that they have and someone else does not. Transparency must be preserved in the bidding process and the cost need not be economically crippling. My advisers also looked at TURFs and South Africa had a brief flirtation with the idea of community quotas. Neither is widely appropriate in South Africa at this time.

Co-management is an option I am investigating, but I am confident that what we are seeking (a mixture of co-management and State control, including a user fee) is as relevant in South Africa as it may be elsewhere in both the First and Third World.

Policy objectives

I am confident that the drafters did not confuse fishing capacity with fishermen, I have already stressed the move to smaller-scale enterprises in the policy objectives, and that statement includes acknowledgement of the value of, *inter alia*, allowing some longlining as well as trawling for hake, our commercially dominant species.

Establishing an exclusive 'no-go zone' inside 110 fathoms for 'artisanal fishermen', as you propose, would not favour the host of other fishermen, e.g. true subsistence and true recreational. Such action has proved hopelessly ineffective as a management measure off Namibia, where there are few subsistence and recreational fishermen.

Processing and onward value-adding are, of course, meaningful ways for many to gain a foothold in the fishing industry and the White Paper advocates such action. However, I still fail to grasp your argument regarding artisanal activity in those sectors, given the clear definition of the term.

I agree with you about a floor price for fish, but doubt that such a statement belongs in a White Paper.

Mariculture will not, I believe, develop unplanned in South Africa. Advisory groups have been put in place for both management and ecosystem impacts of mariculture within my Chief Directorate of Sea Fisheries. I am confident that our current controls preclude any of the negative impacts you mention from taking place here. Mariculture must develop to benefit the very folk whose flag you are flying in your letter.

Your concern about any country entering into fisheries agreements with other

countries is valid. My country has no intention of selling out the requirements and rights of its needy fisherfolk for gain in other sectors. I draw your attention to the third last bullet under 4.10 of the White Paper. Only "in cases where inadequate local capacity prevails, and conditional upon specific authorization" will foreign involvement be considered.

Notwithstanding the above, I thank you most sincerely for your interest in South Africa's fledgling fisheries policy. Support, both local and foreign, is vital to its successful implementation. ¶

This reply to Brian O'Riordan, Fisheries Technology Policy Officer, ITDG, came from Z. Pallo Jordan, Minister, Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, South Africa