



EFF STATEMENT ON SMALL SCALE FISHERIES SECTOR

Wednesday, 3 February 2021

The EFF notes that the policy for the Small Scale Fisheries Sector of South Africa which was first published in the Government Gazette on 20 June 2012, will be finalized by July 2021. We note that this policy is necessary as the Marine Living Resources Act (MLRA) 18 of 1988 has overlooked a huge component of the fishing industry, namely the small-scale fishers.

We further take note that this is as a result of the efforts of the Masifundise Development Trust, small-scale fishers and others, who took the then Minister of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) to court in 2006 over the exclusion of small-scale fishers in the fishing rights allocation process (FRAP).

The issues raised then are still relevant today. Some of the issues raised in the court papers were that the exclusion has resulted in high levels of poverty, food insecurity and unsustainable livelihoods in coastal villages. The Western Cape High Court signed an Equality Court order that small-scale fishermen be allowed to continue catching fish while a policy to improve their rights was drafted. The Small-Scale Fisheries Policy (the SSFP) was then developed as per the court order and subsequently finalised in June 2012. In June 2014, the amendment of the MLRA were signed into law to accommodate small-scale fishers.

The major amendment was the formal recognition of a cooperative as a legal entity qualifying to be a small-scale fishing right-holder. The regulations were finally gazetted in March 2016 to enable the legal allocation and management of small-scale fishing rights. More than 15 000 coastal dwellers, including women and youth, are active in small-scale fishing, from which they derive a living for themselves and their families.

The EFF supports the demands of small-scale fishers:

- That government allocates 50% of all species to cooperatives and black-owned SMEs.
- That government provide technical and market- related support and subsidies to cooperatives to guarantee that they transition to commercial fishing.
- That government revisits long-term leases over harbour infrastructure held by big fishing corporations as small-scale fishers are prevented from using these facilities for docking and off-loading their catch.

The EFF's approach to the fishing industry is guided by the principle that marine resources are public resources and the exploitation of these resources should benefit the public as a whole. Widescale transformation of the fishing industry will only be possible when fishing rights and licences are allocated to small-scale and emerging Black fishing companies.

The government should use the Small Scale Fisheries Policy to intensify the development of black participants in the fishing industry.

Furthermore, the EFF calls on government to prioritise the regulation of deep-sea trawling to minimise the destruction of marine life by injudicious fishing companies and ensure the long-term sustainability of our marine resources.

ISSUED BY THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS

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