



forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 2978 {NW3433E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 22 of 2025

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Mr M N Paulsen (EFF) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) In light of the fact that the Republic's Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Horse Mackerel stands at only 27 000 tonnes per annum, compared to Namibia's 360 000 tonnes and Angola's 620 000 tonnes, despite all three countries sharing the Benguela Current marine ecosystem where Horse Mackerel shoals spawn, feed and grow, what scientific and/or regulatory basis accounts for the comparatively low TAC allocated to the Republic;
- (2) given that the Horse Mackerel and the North Sea Mackerel are distinct species, what are the reasons that (a) the Republic continues to import 40 tonnes of North Sea Mackerel annually while exporting significantly larger volumes of unprocessed Horse Mackerel and (b) his department allows the export of unprocessed Horse Mackerel instead of prioritising domestic value-adding processes that could create jobs and enhance local economic activity?

2978. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- (1) The comparatively lower Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Horse Mackerel in South African waters is based on the best available scientific evidence and ecosystem approach to Fisheries Management. The allocation is informed by annual Scientific resource assessments and data collected by the Department in collaboration with scientific institutions and the fishing industry. These assessments evaluate biomass, recruitment, environmental variability and ecosystem dynamics and impact of the fishery within South Africa's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which only represents a small portion of the broader Benguela Current Marine Ecosystem.

While South Africa, Namibia and Angola do share the Benguela system, the abundance, distribution and migratory behaviour of Horse Mackerel differ across political jurisdictions. South Africa's assessments indicate a lower local biomass relative to its northern neighbours, which justifies a more conservative TAC to ensure long-term sustainability. In contrast, Namibia and Angola have larger populations of Horse Mackerel within their respective EEZs, which supports their higher TACs. South Africa also incorporates ecosystem-based management principles, taking into account bycatch concerns such as porpoises, hake by-catch in the horse mackerel-directed mid-water sector and juvenile horse mackerel by-catch in the purse seine fishery.

- (2) (a) South Africa imports a small volume of North Sea Mackerel primarily to meet consumer demand for a different product profile. North Sea Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) is a cold-water species valued for its high oil content, taste, and culinary uses, which differ significantly from the local Horse Mackerel (*Trachurus capensis*). Domestic consumer preferences and market segmentation drive these import patterns. At the same time, South Africa exports a larger volume of Horse Mackerel, often in unprocessed or semi-processed form, due to limited domestic demand and processing infrastructure for this particular species. The exported product meets strong market demand in West Africa and other regions where Horse Mackerel is a staple protein source.
- (b) The Department does not prohibit the export of unprocessed fish, including Horse Mackerel, despite actively encouraging and supporting local value addition. As one of the Rights Allocation Criteria, Applicants and existing rights holders are incentivised through the allocation process to invest in local processing and job creation, particularly in economically depressed areas. Generally, in South Africa, Horse Mackerel has low local market acceptance, high capital costs of catching and processing, compared to species like Hake and West Coast Rocklobster.

Regards


DR D T GEORGE, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 3/6/2025