



## environment, forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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### NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 597 {NW653E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 4 of 2021

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**Mr N Singh (IFP) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:**

What are the details of (a) an update and trajectory of illegal fishing activity in the South African territorial waters over the past 12 months and (b) the steps and state of readiness that her department in conjunction with law enforcement have in place in order to protect fishing stocks in the Republic?

**597. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:**

- (a) An update and trajectory of illegal fishing activity in the South African territorial waters over the past 12 months involves the illegal harvesting of easily accessible high value inshore resources. This is mainly as a result of poverty and unemployment in coastal communities and the lack of alternative forms of livelihoods other than engaging in illegal fishing.

Over the past 12 months, illegal operators within the territorial waters focused mainly on the illegal harvesting of the West Coast Rock Lobster and abalone resources. The illegal harvesting of abalone and West Coast Rock Lobster occurs in the Northern Cape, Western Cape and extends into the Wild Coast of Eastern Cape region.

The illegal harvesting of abalone and West Coast Rock Lobster are perpetrated by well-equipped organised groups. These groups are responsible for the illegal harvesting of the resource, smuggling and transporting the resource to sophisticated processing establishments and illegally exporting the resource out of the country. For the current financial year, 13 861.7kg of abalone were confiscated from illegal operators in comparison to the 26 583kg confiscated during the past financial year.

- (b) The Marine Protection Services and Governance (MP&G) LAB, in terms of Operation Phakisa Initiative 5: Enhanced Coordinated Enforcement Programme or platform, was created to achieve an integrated and coordinated approach in ensuring compliance and enforcement of the Marine Living Resources Act in the coastal regions as well as the territorial waters. Operation Phakisa Initiative 5 is led and implemented by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. The planning and execution of these initiatives are intelligence driven and are implemented under the auspices of the NATJOINTS. All joint law enforcement partners are under instructions by the NATJOINTS to fully participate in these initiatives along the coastline in all four coastal Provinces.

The Chief Directorate: Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) of the Fisheries Branch is also mandated to target, investigate and address the predominantly top sphere of poaching syndicates. The different role players, including the Fisheries Protection Vessels (FPVs), are responsible for addressing the physical poaching of our marine resources in the territorial waters. Initiative 5, the coordinated enforcement Programme, has become the basis for a collective response to poaching. A broad-base, multi-departmental, approach by National Government has also recently been adopted through a five pillar approach, where the deliverables are clustered and focussed on multiple levels, namely:

1. Intelligence gathering, analysis and coordination approach;
2. Pro-active and compliance enforcement approach;
3. Combat and focused tactical intervention approach;
4. Detection, investigation and prosecution approach; and
5. Communication.

In addition to the above, the Department has the capacity and the capability to detect foreign fishing vessels that have applied and have been authorised to transit through our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (safe passage). This extends to those fishing vessels that are coming to

South Africa's ports and harbours. These vessels have to apply and be authorised to seek shelter close to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as a result of bad weather conditions.

This is done through a system known as Oceans Information Management Systems (OCIMS), which is an integrated vessel tracking system that enables the enforcement partners to track the positions of fishing vessels in South Africa's EEZ and territorial waters, as well as to indicate their positions and speed. The speed at which a vessel is sailing also informs us whether it is fishing or not. This system is also capable of detecting fishing vessels that are trans-shipping at sea, which is an offence.

**Regards**



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**MS B D CREECY, MP**  
**MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**DATE:** 10/03/2021