



Media Statement: Masifundise and Coastal Links challenge DFFE statement on equitable distribution of TLF

For immediate release

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Yesterday, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) issued [a statement](#) to justify their decision regarding the traditional linefish total allowable effort (TAE) for the 2024/2025 fishing season. Masifundise and Coastal Links have provided the following in response:

- In the statement, the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment refers to the **equitable distribution of traditional line fish (TLF)**. Since 2013, Masifundise and Coastal Links have consistently raised concerns with the Department, urging them to prepare for small-scale fisheries TLF. In 2023, instead of setting aside the promised allocation for small-scale fishers, DFFE authorised nearly 100 new entrants into the commercial TLF sector, a move sanctioned by the Minister. Notably, among these entrants were individuals with limited to no prior fishing experience.
- Additionally, the allocation of the **Interim Relief (IR) boats as part of the TAE is not a solution**, because it is not clear whether they will maintain this allocation in future. Small-scale fishers are not guaranteed that this allocation would stay after elections.
- For most Small-scale fishing (SSF) cooperatives in communities, **there will be a reduction in boat allocation**, some examples of this include:
 1. The Aukotowa SSF Co-operative in the **Northern Cape** have written to the department regarding the reduction.

"Our co-operative has a total of 54 members, of which 45 are active at sea. During IR, we were granted 15 boats for TLF. For the current fishing season, we applied for 18 boats and were granted 5 boats. We have pleaded with DFFE to reconsider this decision as it is insufficient and causing major internal conflict in the co-op. We are still sitting without a TLF permit and await the department's response," said Walter Steenkamp, chairperson of the Aukotowa SSF Co-op
 2. In **Stompneus** in the Western Cape, during IR they received 15 boats for TLF and for the current fishing season, they have been allocated 1% of TAE which is equivalent to 2 boats for the entire season.
 3. In **Paternoster**, only 13 boats have been allocated for over 70 active fishers. This is 20 less than in the past which results in 50 fishers sitting at home without an income.
- Yesterday, we received a report from Christian Adams, chairperson of the Steenberg Cove multi-purpose co-operative and Chairperson of the SA Fishers Collective, that he and **his crew were prohibited from fishing TLF (Traditional Linefish) due to an expired permit**, as conveyed by the Fisheries Control Officer. Despite having applied for new permits on 6 February, they had not yet received them. Christian emphasized the discrepancy in treatment, noting that tuna pole

commercial fishers, whose catch includes linefish species like snoek incidentally, are permitted to continue fishing while small-scale fishers are barred from doing so.

- Furthermore, the allocation of **boats fails to resolve the issue in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces**. Specifically, in these provinces, only 18 boats are designated for small-scale fisheries (SSF), despite there being 109 SSF cooperatives comprising over 7000 recognized SSFs.
- **The Department has overlooked the recreational sports fisher boat-based fishery**. Despite repeated requests, the Department has failed to address this aspect, which represents an open fishery. It is imperative that the Department consider reducing the number of recreational boats to accommodate SSF fishers who rely on fishing for their livelihoods.

It appears that there may be a disconnect between the understanding of the small-scale fisheries sector and the perspectives held by the Minister and DFFE. This raises the question of how the current TAE allocation for traditional linefish in the small-scale fisheries sector aligns with the equity principle that DFFE claims to uphold.

Given that traditional line fish serves as a cornerstone for a viable basket which can ensure food security and local economic development, it is imperative to reconsider this allocation decision. Masifundise and Coastal Links continue to urge DFFE to reconsider their decision and fulfill the promise that was made by Minister Creecy which is allocating 50% of the TAE to SSF.

[Support small-scale fishers and sign the petition here](#)

[Read the full statement issued by Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment here](#)

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