

South Africa Hake Trawl



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| DATE CERTIFIED | 16 April 2004 |
| SPECIES | Hake (<i>Merluccius capensis</i> and <i>Merluccius paradoxus</i>) |
| FISHING METHOD | Bottom trawl |
| COUNTRY | South Africa |
| LOCATION | |



The shelf of the South-East Atlantic Ocean between 200m and 1,000m, extending from the Namibian border southward (deep-sea fishery); the south coast of South Africa, in shallower waters – mainly on the Agulhas Bank (inshore fishery)

FISHERY TONNAGE 120,000 tonnes

“ONE ADVANTAGE OF MSC certification is the way it ‘conscientises’ people,” says Roy Bross, Secretary of the South Africa Deepsea Trawling Industry Association (SADSTIA). At first, I think he has invented the word conscientise but in fact it is the creation of the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, who defined it as consciousness-raising through a sequence of distinct stages. “It makes you think about such things as ecosystem approaches to fisheries and acting them out,” Bross explains. “We have done a few things in that regard.”

Establishing Marine Protected Areas

In response to one MSC condition, requiring it to identify habitat susceptible to impacts from bottom trawling, the fishery initiated an independent assessment of the potential for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Four projects are under way to determine where the MPAs should be. In the meantime, trawling is permitted only in established fishing grounds where the bottom is flat and muddy, unless the new areas have been properly investigated by way of an environmental impact assessment. “That has been one of the pronounced gains of certification,” Bross agrees. “The MSC directed our attention to the importance of MPAs, and that resulted in us spending a lot of money on research.”

Drastically reducing seabird bycatch

In similar fashion, the fishery commissioned a study in October 2004, looking at how many seabirds were being caught in trawl cables – a problem first identified in the Falkland Islands. As a condition of certification, the fishery was required “to investigate seabird mortality within a year”, says Dr Samantha Petersen of WWF, one of three organisations involved in the study. “If it was found to be significant, the fishery would then be required to mitigate the mortality within the next year.”

On average, 18,000 birds were being killed annually, Dr Petersen found, so “the industry moved very quickly” to introduce measures such as tori

lines (streamers normally flown behind longline vessels to scare birds away from bait) and restrictions on fish processing while nets are being set, because offal thrown overboard is “a free meal” that attracts birds, Dr Petersen says. As a result, seabird mortality has been reduced to just 200 birds per year.

Though voluntary at first, tori lines were later made mandatory. “That is what happens,” Bross says. “We put in place measures because of the MSC. The government then will not hesitate to enshrine them in the regulations, to make sure everyone has to do them. It comes back to this conscientising thing.”

Stock rebuilding plan for kingklip

In 2004, there was also concern about the status of kingklip – a fish capable of being targeted by longliners but incidentally caught in trawls. Clearer guidance was needed. As a condition of certification, the fishery had to put in place a bycatch policy and, for kingklip, a stock rebuilding plan. As a result, precautionary catch limits for kingklip have been set, spawning grounds are closed at appropriate times and “limits have been placed on other species”, Bross says. “Before, we did not have a bycatch policy. Now, we have a very definite one, refined on a yearly basis”. It is “preventive, not curative”, he stresses, since “virtually no iconic bycatch or undesirable fish were being caught”.

Changing mindsets

The question to ask, Bross believes, is not how MSC certification changes the specific details of how fisheries are managed, but how it alters mindsets. “From that kind of change, a lot of benefits continue to flow,” he maintains. “It may not sound like a direct benefit, but I believe it is one of the more fundamental advantages of MSC certification. It changes the thinking of all kinds of people involved in the business. That should not be underplayed.”

“ The MSC certification provided a platform and an incentive for us to work together. Prior to that, the industry was more suspicious of us. Once MSC status was on the cards, it gave us a common goal and opened up a dialogue that was not there before ”

Dr Samantha Petersen, Sustainable Fisheries Programme Manager, WWF



“ We, as a private-sector entity, will put in place measures – about bird kill, about bycatch – because of the MSC. The government will not hesitate to enshrine it in the regulations. People then say ‘It’s the law, you have to obey’... but anyone who knows will realise it evolved from the MSC ”

Roy Bross, Secretary, South Africa Deepsea Trawling Industry Association