

QUESTION 3120

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Question 3120 for written reply: National Assembly, Ms L D Mazibuko (DA) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

(1) Whether there has been an increase in abalone poaching recently; if not, how was this conclusion reached; if so, what are the relevant details; (2) what is her department's estimated figure for the amount of abalone poached in the 2010-11 financial year; (3)(a) what is the current state of health of the abalone fishery in each of the zones along the coast and (b) which zones, if any, are closed to legal abalone harvesting;(4) whether she intends to close any further zones to legal abalone harvesting; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;(5) what total amount of money was raised for the Marine Living Resources Fund from the sale of confiscated abalone in the (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010 - 11 financial years? **NW3644E**

REPLY:

(1) Yes, the results from the data on confiscations that was collected and analysed show increased trends in poaching. However, it is very difficult to obtain precise data on the quantity of abalone poached because illegal catches are, by their very nature, unregulated and unreported.

(2) The estimated amount of confiscated abalone for the 2010 – 11 financial year stands on 591 011 kg.

(3) (a) Depletion of the abalone resource (i.e. the percentage of the estimated pre-exploitation level that remains) per zone is estimated as follows: Zone A: 37% Zone B: 29% Zone C: 11% Zone D: 28%. These estimates are all higher than they were in 2009 not because the stocks have improved, but because the new information available (including the improved estimates of poaching) causes the model to back-calculate the pre-exploitation level. Given the legal harvest and the large amount of abalone poached recently, the model then back-calculates that there must have been more abalone at the pre-exploitation level than was previously estimated, and hence the current status (depletion) is higher than that was estimated in 2009. However, when the values re-calculated in 2011 (for 2009 and 2011), all four zones show a decline between 2009 and 2011, as follows: Zone A: 42% in 2009; 37% in 2011 Zone B: 32% in 2009; 29% in 2011 Zone C: 14% in 2009; 11% in 2011 Zone D: 32% in 2009; 28% in 2011 Zones E, F and G are not assessed in the same way. However, stock status indicators (such as Catch Per Unit Effort) indicate that the stocks remain capable of sustaining fishing.

(b) Zones C and D are currently closed to legal fishing. In particular, resource recovery is not expected in Zone D because of an incursion of West Coast rock lobster which prey heavily on the sea urchins which juvenile abalone use to shelter under. Without this urchin cover juvenile abalone are unable to survive and replenish the population.

(4) No, the Department recommends that the status quo remains and that no further areas are closed to fishing. There is not enough data to warrant such a decision. Furthermore, the Department is proceeding with implementing the experimental fisheries on the Eastern side of False Bay and in the Eastern Cape.

(5) As per the Department's Annual Reports, net amounts of (a) R19, 9 m for 2009/10 and (b) R11.3 m for 2010/11 were raised from the sale of confiscated Abalone.