

Small-scale fishers could be allowed to catch new species

By [Liezi Human](#)

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Small-scale fishers in the Western Cape could be allowed to catch new species, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment has said.



The Department of Fisheries is finalising policy for the small-scale fishing sector in the Western Cape. Archive photo: Ashraf Hendricks

The Department is finalising policy for the small-scale sector in the Western Cape.

Small-scale fishing cooperatives must be sustainable, Abongile Ngqongwa, deputy director of small-scale fisheries management, told Parliament on Tuesday. He said most resources had been declining and the department's objective was to ensure the fishers were supported and the cooperatives were "operational".

He said the department would examine what should still be allocated to the small-scale sector. Some species would be shared with the commercial sector. "That will need to be a fair process moving forward," he said.

So far, 62 small-scale fishing cooperatives in the Western Cape have been registered with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC). Long-awaited 15-year fishing rights were given to about 3,850 small-scale fishers in [November 2023](#).



Western Cape small-scale fishers finally get their rights

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The finalisation of these rights had been delayed in the Western Cape for several years, after the 2016-19 rights allocation was set aside and the process restarted. Rights had already been allocated to fishers and cooperatives in the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal.

Deputy director-general of fisheries management Sue Middleton told Parliament that species allocated to small-scale fishing cooperatives included squid, West Coast rock lobster, seaweed, hake handline, linefish, oysters, and white mussels. She said there had been suggestions that the basket of species should be enlarged. The department was “welcoming any suggestions”, she said.

Middleton also said the department is setting up a three-year programme of mentors to support cooperatives with business and financial management.

MP Hannah Shameema Winkler (DA) asked what the department had learned from the “botched process” of allocating fishing rights. She said it “doesn’t cast a favourable light on the department that we constantly have to endure these massive challenges when it comes to fishing rights allocation” and added that it “erodes the integrity” and “trust” of the fishers.

MP Nazier Paulsen (EFF) said that it is important that mentors assist the cooperatives because running the cooperatives would be “complex”.

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