

National SEA for Aquaculture Development in South Africa Meeting Notes

National Strategic Environmental Assessment for Aquaculture Development in South Africa

Focus Group Meeting #3

Date: 04 October 2016
Venue: Citrus Research Institute Boardroom, Nelspruit
Focus areas: Mpumalanga

Attendees

Name	Organisation	Email
Asanda Njobeni	DAFF	AsandaN@daff.gov.za
Dee Malcomess	Falls Fish Farm	cortfish@lantic.net
Gerrie Van der Merwe	MTF/TSA	gerrie.lunsklip@gmail.com
Granny Mahlare	DWS	mahlarem@dws.gov.za
Karabo Mashabela	CSIR	KMashabela1@csir.co.za
Len Coetzer	MP DARDLEA	LCoetzer@mpg.gov.za
Lizande Kellerman	CSIR	LKellerman@csir.co.za
Luanita Snyman-Van der Walt	CSIR	LvdWalt1@csir.co.za
M E Shongwe	KOBWA	mgabhishangwa@gmail.co.za
Michelle Pretorius	DAFF	MichellePR@daff.gov.za
Myron Cort	Falls Fish Farm	cortfish@lantic.net
Nicholas Mkhathshwa	KOBWA	Nicholas.mkhathshwa@kobwa.co.za
Pat Morant	CSIR	pmorant@csir.co.za
Patricia Noku	MP DARDLEA	Pledwaba@gmail.com
Ray Mutessa	Ukulima Food Sovereignty	mutessaray@gmail.com
Selby Hlatshwayo	MP DARDLEA	shlatshwayo@mpg.gov.za
Simon Moganetsi	DEA	Smoganetsi@environment.gov.za
Stephen Goetze	MP DARDLEA	sjgoetze@mpg.gov.za

Apologies / Invited but did not attend

Name	Organisation	Email
Dee Fischer	DEA	Dfischer@environment@gov.za
Merwyn Lotter	MTPA	mervyn.lotter@gmail.com
Jacob Simon Migidi	MP DARDLEA	JMarakala@mpg.gov.za
Valdi Pereira	TAASA	valdi@mweb.co.za
Bill Bainbridge	FOSAF	wrbainbr@iafrica.com

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List of acronyms

CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
HOD	Head of Department
KOBWA	Komati Basin Water Authority
MP DARDLEA	Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs
MP	Mpumalanga Province
MTF	Mpumalanga Trout Forum
MTPA	Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency
NDP	National Development Plan
NWA	National Water Act of 36 of 1998
SA	South Africa
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
TAASA	Tilapia Aquaculture Association of South Africa
TSA	Trout South Africa
WULA	Water Use License Application

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1. Overview of Aquaculture SEA – approach, objectives, scope, key outputs & stakeholder engagement

- Presentation by Lizande Kellerman (CSIR)
- Dee Malcomess (Falls Fish Farm) suggested the Department of Labour be included as a stakeholder in the SEA process as aquaculture contributes largely to job creation.
- Further suggestions are that project funding investors e.g. Land Bank and environmental consultants, be included in the stakeholder engagement process.

2. Legislative context for the Aquaculture SEA

- Presentation by Lizande Kellerman (CSIR)
- Patricia Noku (MP DARDLEA) stated that all aquaculture permits in Mpumalanga are currently issued by MTPA as they are the permit issuing body in MP.
- Len Coetzer (MP DARDLEA) commented that the Mpumalanga Nature Conservation Act has replaced the Nature Conservation Ordinance. He also mentioned that it is difficult to obtain a permit to import Tilapia as this species is considered a hybrid.
- Stephen Goetze (MP DARDLEA) commented that Red breasted Tilapia is allowed into MP, but not Mozambican Tilapia.
- Gerrie van der Merwe (MTF/TSA) commented that permits should be for a species that can be harmful or dangerous to the environment; trout has been in the country for more than 120 years. He asked why does trout need to be regulated so strictly.
 - Asanda Njobeni (DAFF) responded stating that different provinces regulate aquaculture differently, there is no common approach. The SEA will help achieve alignment between provinces in terms of governance.
- Gerrie van der Merwe (MTF/TSA) commented that the outcome of the SEA will show if there is new investment potential in aquaculture. During the Operation Phakisa labs in Durban it was decided/ or agreed that where trout occur in the country permits will not be required, but where they do not occur all efforts will be made not to introduce them into these areas. The trout mapping by SANBI needs to be followed up with a process of assessing the environmental sensitivities. It has been agreed where trout should not occur and why they should not be there, thus there is no need for an additional layer of legislation to be created that may inhibit investment.
 - Asanda Njobeni (DAFF) confirmed that there is a market for trout in South Africa; SA is not producing enough for the present consumer demand, hence the opportunity. Legislation needs to enable the poorer farmers to be able to cultivate fish for subsistence without being criminalised and their catch confiscated. Additionally farmers are not protected in the event that they lose fish due to floods or disease. This is aimed to be achieved through the Aquaculture Bill.
- Gerrie van der Merwe (MTF/TSA) commented that the industry is not against regulation per se. For the industry, enabling means to be able to do business and yet government wants to control the industry; if there is no harmony between industry and the competent authorities there will be no potential for investment. By over-regulation, government can kill investment opportunities. He further stated that aquaculture was developed in SA as mixed farming e.g. pigs and Tilapia. There are some risks associated with aquaculture,

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especially to biodiversity, but generally low-risk activities when compared to e.g. sewage discharge in some coastal towns. The aquaculture industry is very strictly regulated and the penalties are very extreme. One transgression in terms of the norms and standards can result in an operation being ceased; therefore it is the opinion of industry that norms and standards would not be desirable. Also, rectification in terms of NEMA takes very long which is further constraining the industry.

- Len Coetzer (MP DARDLEA) said that the development of norms and standards that are properly structured and adapted according to the receiving environment are welcomed. Current legislation for conservation officials deals with economic development and tourism, but MTPA is being restructured in such a way that they will only deal with the conservation areas are within their mandate. From agriculture, one always tries to get the best product from the species one is farming with. Even if they restrict Tilapia (Mozambican) it means that when the animal is selected for performance indicators, then one is also polluting the poor genes that conservation is trying to protect. Selection of high performance species is the preferred option. He shared an example of a dam that was downgraded to “no value for conservation”, but people are prosecuted for catching fish / aquaculture activities without a permit. The issue appears to be the non-alignment of conservation and agriculture.
 - Lizande Kellerman (CSIR) responded stating that aquaculture is considered an agricultural activity with potential biodiversity/conservation risks, but in MP it is mainly governed by the department who has an environmental mandate.
- Gerrie van der Merwe (MTF/TSA) is of the opinion that current agricultural legislation is sufficient to govern aquaculture, therefore the need for a general laws amendment process instead of having a new Aquaculture Act.
 - Simon Moganetsi (DEA) responded stating that the purpose of the SEA is to coordinate approvals and reduce over-regulation of the industry and that there are also proposed amendments to the EIA regulations in this regard.
- Myron Cort (Falls Fish Farm) commented that it took five years for DWS to issue their farm with a Water Use License. There were also the issues of status change to sewage farms, e.g. water taps and pipes having to be painted like a sewage farm.
 - Lizande Kellerman (CSIR) responded stating that DWS is considering General Authorisation for aquaculture in cases where there is low risk to the water resource. Only if one would trigger activities in the NWA beyond known thresholds there would be a requirement for a WULA.
- Dee Malcomess (Falls Fish Farm) commented that the time and cost involved for the WULA requirements for their farm could have paid half an annual salary of a farm worker. Also, it should be the DWS's responsibility to do onsite monitoring and testing, because farmers are struggling to survive and paying huge taxes. This could negatively impact on emerging farmers who want to development aquaculture farms.
- Len Coetzer (MP DARDLEA) commented that Aquaculture is a renewable resource that can help government to achieve their goals in terms of the NDP re: poverty alleviation and job creation. Aquaculture development should thus be done in a proper manner with an agricultural output as focus.

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3. *Data capture and mapping exercise for aquaculture facilities*

- Presentation by Luanita Snyman-van der Walt (CSIR)
- Len Coetzer (MP DARDLEA) commented MTPA has embarked on a biodiversity impact study of MP and mapped all sensitive areas due to high density of mining operations. This mapping exercise of the province has identified all areas available for aquaculture development with lowest sensitivity. Areas of highest sensitivity have been declared after which then DRDLR allocates these pieces of land to new owners who do not know anything about the biodiversity risk of these areas. Areas that were declared as being of high endemic value have now been transformed by human settlements, hence this conflict between nature conservation and agriculture, rural development and land reform authorities.
 - Luanita Snyman-van der Walt (CSIR) responded stating that the SEA will aim to develop sensitivity screening of specific sites for aquaculture development.
- Stephen Goetze (MP DARDLEA) commented that a dataset with spatial data is available containing the biodiversity conservation map for Mpumalanga and associated sensitivity mapping done by SANBI. The conservation plan also shows buffer zones and sensitive areas. Patricia Noku (MP DARDLEA) that this data can be sourced by means of a formal written request to the HOD.
- Further inputs from participating stakeholders are as follow:
 - Important to note the development history of the aquaculture industry to understand the social-economic benefit of aquaculture.
 - Huge opportunities in utilizing Eskom and DWS-owned water bodies (dams) for aquaculture development and community empowerment.
 - The SEA should consider new, existing and decommissioned facilities.
 - Within a municipal area there is a SDF that needs to clearly state the potential for aquaculture development and the positive impact on tourism.
 - Aquaculture as a farming practice should be considered in municipal economic business plans to take advantages of the linkages aquaculture has with socio-economic development. This will enhance people's understanding of aquaculture and its potential to create employment and social equality.
 - Fish is an important source of protein; hence many people are interested in farming with e.g. Tilapia. However, the industry is struggling to compete with cheap imports from countries whose governments support aquaculture and have less legislative requirements. As a result the sustainability of aquaculture as an industry is threatened.
 - Production volumes should be included as data field in the mapping exercise.
 - National DEA and DAFF have legislative frameworks which provincial nature conservation departments must adopt instead of developing its own legislature for the development of aquaculture, for inland provinces in particular. Consequently,

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the mapping exercise will be easily adopted, updated and maintained moving forward.

End of Meeting