



South African hake trawl fishery recertified to MSC standard

The world's first Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)-certified hake trawl fishery has celebrated 16 years under the status, with increasing demand for its marine catch in niche markets in Europe, North America, and Australia that prefer traceable seafood products.

South Africa's hake trawl fishery was recertified on February 12, 2021, after a fourth successful assessment confirming the fishery's healthy stock, minimal impact on the environment, and operational efficiency of the resource qualify it for certification.

"Since its first certification the fishery has seen several environmental benefits, including the rebuilding of stocks, reductions in seabird interactions, improved management of bycatches, and greater understanding of benthic impacts, in pursuit of responsible ecosystem-based fisheries management," MSC said in a press release.

The fishery was first certified in 2004, making it the world's first hake fishery and the second groundfish fishery to meet the globally recognized standard for sustainable fishing set by the MSC.

An estimated 120,000 metric tons of hake is produced by South Africa's hake trawl industry, with an estimated 67 percent of the catch destined for the export market.

South African Deep-Sea Trawling Industry Association Chairman and Sea Harvest CEO Felix Ratheb said the certification has opened more market opportunities for South African hake – especially in Germany, Holland, Sweden, Australia, the U.S., and the United Kingdom.



“Customers in these countries demand seafood products that can be traced to a sustainable source,” he said.

The MSC certification, Ratheb said, “is vital to our export business and to the success of our fishery.”

South Africa’s trawled hake generates an estimated ZAR 4.5 billion (USD 303 million, EUR 249 million) annually, making it the most valuable commercial fishery in Southern Africa.

Thirty-two companies, two-thirds of them black-owned, hold fishing rights the South African trawl hake fishery, with approximately 27,000 people benefitting directly or indirectly from the marine resource.

“The MSC standard is regularly updated to reflect current scientific understanding on what it means to be sustainable, and for 16 years the South African hake trawl fishery has played a leading role in working with government, scientists and NGOs to ensure the long-term future of the hake resource,” MSC Africa, Middle East and South Asia Program Manager Michael Marriott said.

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