

# PROSPECTIVE South Africa Wild Coast East Coast rock lobster - hand caught

## Overview

### FIP Description

Fish for Good was a Pathway Project funded by the Dutch Postcode Lottery, facilitated by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and with WWF South Africa (WWF-SA) as the implementing partner in the project. The Fish for Good Project aims were to contribute to the building of fisheries sustainability infrastructure in South Africa, Indonesia, and Mexico to improve environmental sustainability and bring about socio-economic benefits for fishing communities.

The project used the Pathway Project model which involved a country-specific analysis of fisheries as a way of introducing the MSC programme to small-scale fisheries, coastal fishers, and other types of hard-to-engage fisheries. The MSC has shown that its fishery certification and the eco-labelling programme can drive improvements amongst fisheries leading to healthier oceans by leveraging market incentives on offer by the MSC programme.

In South Africa, the Fish for Good Project had mapped 15 fisheries, conducted nine pre-assessments, and selected five fisheries to go for the development of action plans and implementation through Fishery Improvement Projects (FIP). One of the fisheries chosen for the FIP stage was the East Coast Rock Lobster Fishery.

Artisanal exploitation of East Coast rock lobster along the Wild Coast area has a long history, and was considered illegal up to 1994. It was nevertheless largely tolerated, because the area is remote, under traditional leadership, and also because of political expediency – i.e. it formed part of the former 'Transkei' homeland area during the apartheid era, with separate governance structures in place. The artisanal fishery was expanded to a small-scale fishery in 2005 in which lobsters could be sold to buying stations or tourists.

Only hand-collection methods (including ring nets) are allowed in the small-scale fishery, aided with poling with bait from the shore at night, or by breath-hold diving in the shallow subtidal during the day. Nominally, the fishery is subject to a suite of regulations in terms of the Marine Living Resources Act (Act 18 of 1998), and is enforced by DFFE officers. Individual fishers must have a permit, can only fish during the open fishing season (1st March to 31st October), and have a bag-limit of 8 lobsters per day per permit, with a minimum legal size of 65 mm

carapace length (CL). Fishers are allowed to accumulate their daily bag-limit (8 pp/pd) within each month, to make up for days when conditions are unfavourable for fishing. Fishing gear is restricted to hand-collection from the shore – without the use of a boat or SCUBA gear.

The above management strategy was adapted from those for a recreational fishery for the same species in the neighbouring KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province (not part of the UoA for this pre- assessment). Unlike for the small-scale fishery along the Wild Coast, lobsters caught by the KZN recreational fishery may not be sold. Compliance with the permit conditions is weak along the Wild Coast, and the effectiveness of the management plan and its enforcement is sub-optimal, with very few inspections taking place at the fisher level. A lack of guidance and sufficient manpower to patrol.

Such a large area, combined with low awareness of the effects of fishing on the environment in fishers, are the main weaknesses of the present management system.

The organized Wild Coast lobster fishery relies on commercial operators (buyers), who negotiate annual contracts with local community leaders. Each community has a list of recognized fishers with permit numbers – there are presently about 2,000 individual permit holders, in total. The operator negotiates the price to be paid per kg in that year with the community leaders, and also where the collection points will be. Individual fishers catch lobsters and deliver them to these collection points, which are often remote and difficult to reach by vehicle. The industry is quite small, with only 3-4 commercial permits for local operators (or factories with live tank facilities, packing and steaming, freezing facilities) on the Wild Coast, each with several ‘communities’ signed up and selling lobsters to them. It is a competitive system, and communities may change the operators that they deliver to annually, based on the price offered per kg and logistic advantages of newly proposed contracts.

## How is this FIP Doing?

### Current Status:

**Actions Progress** This shows the proportion of actions in the workplan that the FIP has completed.

0%

### FIP Type

Prospective

### FIP Stage

Stage 1: FIP Development

## Start and Projected End Dates

### Species

**Common Name**

Red Rock Lobster

**Scientific Name**

Panulirus homarus

### Gear Type

[Hand Gathered](#)

[Ring Net](#)

### Location

**FAO Major Fishing Area**

[Area 51 \(Indian Ocean, Western\)](#)

**Exclusive Economic Zones****Country**

South Africa

**Geographic Scope**

Port Saint Johns, Wild Coast of Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

## FIP Leads

**Organization Name**

WWF South Africa

**Organization Type**

NGO

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