

Evolving ABALOBI's Monitoring Model

As part of ABALOBI's ongoing commitment to the evolution and improvement of our Community-level Fishery Improvement Project (C-FIP), we have transitioned from employing ABALOBI monitors to a more integrated, efficient, and scalable monitoring model. This shift reflects our dedication to maintaining the highest standards of ecological and social monitoring while empowering communities and streamlining operations. The evolved model encompasses three key advancements:

1. **Mainstreaming Monitoring through DFFE**

We have aligned our monitoring efforts with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) by integrating monitoring responsibilities into their existing network of monitors. This mainstreaming approach not only enhances sustainability by embedding monitoring within government structures but also directly supports our commitment to building deeper working relationships with DFFE. Specifically, this move aligns with work plan action items 1 and 2:

- **Action Item 1:** *“Collect data to evaluate impacts on non-target species”*—This includes collaborating with relevant authorities to review existing data collection protocols, implementing data input processes with fishers, and developing appropriate data fields in the ABALOBI Fisher app as needed.
- **Action Item 2:** *“Develop an equitable and precautionary harvest strategy”*—This involves consulting with DFFE officials and Struisbaai fishers to benchmark and understand existing harvest strategies and governance requirements, building communication channels to actively engage local fishers on agreed harvest strategies.

2. **Automation via Digital Tools**

The integration of Tally digital traceability technology has automated key aspects of monitoring. This has not only reduced the need for manual data collection but also improved the accuracy, efficiency, and timeliness of reporting. Automation enables fishers to focus on sustainable practices while ensuring robust data flows for fisheries management and traceability.

3. **Introduction of a Community Data Champion**

To retain a strong community presence, we have introduced the role of a Community Data Champion—a trusted individual from within the fishing community trained to oversee data collection and act as a liaison between the community and ABALOBI. This approach strengthens local ownership of the C-FIP, fosters trust, and ensures that monitoring remains deeply rooted in the community context.

Through this evolved monitoring model, ABALOBI has demonstrated its ability to adapt and innovate while maintaining a people-centered approach. By mainstreaming through DFFE, automating with advanced tools, and empowering communities with data champions, we have ensured that our monitoring systems are not only robust but also sustainable and scalable for long-term impact.

This evolution not only builds on our existing collaboration with fishers and DFFE but also directly supports the shared goals of FisheryProgress to promote sustainability, community empowerment, and transparency in the small-scale fisheries sector.