

RESOLUTION ON FISHERIES

BACKGROUND

Historically, access to marine resources was unrestricted. In order to facilitate the monopolisation of the fishing resource by a few white companies, a system of quotas was introduced. In this way many black fisher folk lost the access rights they had had for generations. At the present time, the fishing industry is completely biased in favour of a few large and medium sized white companies. This is illustrated by the fact that just three (3) companies hold :

- 72% of the hake quota;
- 75% of the abalone quota, and
- 71% of the sole quota

Overall, across all species, approximately nine tenths (9/10) of the resource is controlled by a hand-full of companies. Since 1994, some of these companies have attempted to blacken their faces. They have also sold minority shares to some black business consortia. Further, a few members of the black elite have been given quotas. None of the above amounts to any kind of restructuring. None of the historic imbalances have been addressed. The above have merely been attempts to confuse the issue and to frustrate any process that attempts to restructure the industry.

Prior to, and after the 1994 election, there were various initiatives by Alliance members to outline an equitable and just policy of reconstruction and development for the fishing industry.

THE RDP

The RDP outlines the broad framework within which policy development should occur;

“The primary objective of fisheries policy is the upliftment of impoverished coastal communities through improved access to marine resources and the sustainable management of those resources through appropriate strategies.”

THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE (IDRC)

In 1995 the IDRC published the environment reconstruction and development guide. This document outline the following recommendations for fisheries policy;

1. The government must change the way that fishing licenses and quotas are given. They must sure that communities also get fishing licenses. They must also do more to stop people without licenses catching fish.
2. Communities, industry and Unions must take part in changing the industry.
3. Community based fishing should be encouraged. This will create more jobs for poor people living on the coast. The community can help to make sure that people without licenses do not catch the fish.

4. The government should look at helping local communities to set up co-operatives to process and sell fish.
5. The rights of small - scale fishers must be protected.
6. Local communities must be allowed to catch a certain amount of fish. The government must help these communities to buy nets and boats.

THE FISHERIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (FPDC)

On the 27th October 1994 the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism initiated a process of developing a National Fisheries Policy. Mr Mandla Gxanyana, General Secretary of FAWU, was appointed to lead the policy development committee whose task it was to develop a national fisheries policy. This committee initiated a massive process of investigating the development of a national fisheries policy. It was the most comprehensive, inclusive and far reaching fisheries policy development process ever conducted in South Africa. The report of the FPDC was handed to the Minister in June 1996. It was understood that this report would form the basis of a White Paper on sea fisheries policy.

Regarding access rights, the FPDC looked at a number of possible solutions to facilitate the entry of historical disadvantaged people into the fishing industry. One of the models outlined a particularly useful and effective way of transferring access rights to historically disadvantaged people. In terms of this model the following example was used to illustrate how the procedure might work. If a company hold rights to particular fishery, these rights should be reduced by a

total of ten percent (10%) spread over a period of five to ten (5 - 10) years ie. a process of attrition amounting to about one to two percent (1 - 2%) per year. This process can be followed by each company with respect to their existing rights in particular fisheries. After the reduction of rights has taken place, a second phase could begin in terms of which the holder should be granted long term security, guaranteeing possession of the remaining rights.

During phase one, potential new entrants should be assessed to ensure that they have adequate potential and capacity to make use of the rights for which they apply. They should pay a purchase price for the rights allocated. They should also be able to receive financial and technical assistance from the State. The State would be able to use the income from the purchase prices for the financial and technical empowerment of the historically disadvantaged entrants.

The FPDC also outlined other examples of changes that could create opportunities for new entrants :

1. Small business should be allowed entry into the pelagic fishery, particularly in terms of catches that can be made inshore;
2. The long lining of hake could provide opportunities for a wider range of entrants;
3. Regarding West Coast rock lobster, hoopnetting can be operated inexpensively and could therefore be used as a means of broadening access;

4. There are several small scale fisheries that are either underdeveloped or are completely new. After appropriate development, these industries could offer opportunities for small business and other new entrants. Examples include the development of fisheries on whelks, West Coast limpets, white mussel and some sea weeds and kelp.
5. In many cases companies own the fishing vehicles, the quotas, the factories and the markets. If this food chain could be broken up, it could create opportunities for new entrants in various aspect's of the industry. Further, private boat owners have been allocated quotas that have to be sold to specific factories. This can lead to unfair practices, for example factories may set low prices or even refuse to purchase catches. Such unfair practices must stop. Private boat owners should be allowed to sell the catches to any factory.

RESPONSE TO WHITE PAPER

The White paper does not address the needs and aspirations of the victims of Apartheid, including artisanal fishers, fishing communities and workers. Furthermore it does not recognise the important contribution that workers have made to the development and wealth of the industry.

It does not offer a political settlement that addresses the wrongs of the past, in the terms envisaged by the RDP. It does not provide the terms and clear times for the restructuring of the industry.

It does not:

1. it does not reflect the FAWU view of restructuring raised during the FPDC process;
2. promote job security , job creation, and the health and safety of fishing workers;
3. it does not specify what percentage of the T.A.C. will be reserved for the historically disadvantaged;
4. it does not promote the correct methods for development and empowerment;
5. it does not incorporate the appropriate measures for enforcement and it notably omits community participation in policing the resource;
6. it does not offer viable mechanisms for the achievement of bio-diversity and sustainable utilisation;
7. it does not deal with food security;
8. it does not put an end to paper quotas;
9. it does not spell out the criteria for allocating quotas;
10. it does not spell out how the Consultative Advisory Forum will be constituted;
11. it does not show how competitiveness and globalization are relevant;

12. it does not deal with the issue of foreign participation and joint ventures;
13. it does not deal with the opening of new fisheries;
14. it does not compel scientific research to take into account socio-economic factors;
15. deal with monopolistic nature of the industry.

The state must make a bold and direct intervention to restructure the industry, so that the needs of historically disadvantaged South Africans are met.

RESOLVED

1. That the conference reject the White Paper produced by the Department of Environmental Affairs.
2. That we accept the amended critique discussion document as a framework document for FAWU to develop its submission.
3. FAWU to work with the Alliance and International bodies in particular ITF in developing a progressive policy that will address the RDP principals and recommendation raised by the IDRC.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The commission must decide a programme of action. This can include:

1. A meeting of the Alliance to agree on a common vision, policy and the way forward.
2. Developing a comprehensive fisheries policy that reflects FAWU's position.
3. Engaging the Minister, ANC study group and Parliamentary Committee on the policy.