

Wisdom needed in fishing rights allocation

By [Jenna Etheridge](#)

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Balancing different types of fishing situations to grant rights fairly requires "the wisdom of Solomon", a participant at a public consultative meeting told the fisheries department in Cape Town on Wednesday.



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Four categories of applicants for fishing rights

"When you talk about a matter of balancing, you have to formulate a rational basis. It cannot be subjective because then you will make yourself open to appeals," said Armin Weimar of the Wild Benguela Harvest company, who had been in the industry for 43 years.

His observation was that there were actually four categories of applicants for fishing rights - those who previously owned rights in a sector, applicants with rights in other sectors, company applicants, and then new entrants.

"New entrants would be, for instance, five crewmen from a lobster boat that have fished as crew for their whole life and have now formed a company." He believed these new entrants deserved to be allocated rights just as much as a major company.

Fisheries operations chief director, Sue Middleton, noted his comment.

Extension of the public comment period

The meetings form part of the 2015/16 fishing rights allocation process. Department officials are visiting provinces for consultation on 10 sector policies and a policy on fish processing, as well as draft application forms and applicable fees. The drafts were published last month and were up for comment before being finalised. The department had applied for an extension of the public comment period until the middle of August.

Hangberg resident Davina Jonathan, 42, told News24 she attended the meeting because her family had a history of fishing and she was interested in the policies and environment surrounding commercial and small-scale fishing. Her fear was that largely coloured small-scale fishermen would be forgotten. "Now we are almost being ousted of the fishing industry. We are not being recognised. My question is how do they fit in? How is the tide going to turn?"

The results of the application process would be announced in February next year, with time set aside afterwards for appeals.

A third consultation meeting will be held at the same venue on Thursday, with Port Nolloth, Hondeklipbaai and Doring Bay their next ports of call on Monday.

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