

## **National Marine Week 11-15 October**

The aim of National Marine Week is to create awareness of the marine and coastal environment and the benefits that our coasts and oceans and their resources provide us with. It promotes using the resources from our oceans and coast in a sustainable way for the benefit of present and future generations. Less than 1% of the ocean is within formally protected areas.

Oceans make up 70% of the planet's surface and about 60% of the earth's human population live along the coast. In addition to being an area for human settlement and development the coast is valuable for commerce, recreation, culture and history.

The ocean has always been viewed as a bottomless resource but the reality is that marine resources are finite. The ocean provides us with tremendous and often unseen economic, social and cultural benefits; it acts as a vast highway for commerce, it provides a place for recreation and it supplies food or income for billions of people worldwide.

During the past century oceans have been negatively affected due to competing and greedy resource utilisation, resulting in the present-day situation where about 75% of commercial marine species are classified as over-exploited. It is estimated that over 40% of Africa's population derives its livelihood from coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. In time this percentage will increase with human migration increasing pressures on marine ecosystems.

80% of the world's fish stocks are either overexploited or exploited to their maximum (2008 United Nation's Food and Agricultural organisation report).

- No fishing gear is completely selective. As a result, many non-target fish or endangered species of albatrosses, sharks and turtles are accidentally caught as bycatch. Globally, it is estimated that approximately a quarter of what is caught is thrown back, often dead, and wasted (2008 United Nation's Food and Agricultural organisation report).
- Some fishing techniques pose a threat to marine habitats which are the life support system for marine life.
- Marine ecosystems exist in a delicate balance – therefore harvesting a species can have implications for the function of the entire system.

### **What can we do?**

You can make a difference no matter what role you play in the seafood supply chain. From the fishermen out on the water right through to consumers buying seafood in their local restaurants and retailers, we can all play our part and get involved in creating a sustainable seafood industry. The SASSI (The Southern African Sustainable Seafood Initiative) list has recently been updated. This list tells you about which seafood species are legal and more sustainable choices from South African fish populations.

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