

**ACHIEVING EQUITY IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY: THE FATE OF INFORMAL
FISHERS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE *POLICY FOR THE SMALL-SCALE
FISHERIES SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA***

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SUMMARY

The implementation of the *Marine Living Resources Act* 18 of 1998 which governs fisheries management in South Africa is guided by a series of objectives. Chief amongst these are the need to ensure resource sustainability, promote economic growth and achieve equity in the fishing industry. Striking a balance among these competing imperatives is a necessary but also monumental task, one which South Africa has arguably failed to achieve to date. In particular, as far the equity objective is concerned, a group of fishers, including both subsistence and artisanal fishers, have continued to be marginalised and overlooked in the fishing rights allocation process.

The *Policy for the Small-Scale Fisheries Sector in South Africa* aims to provide recognition and redress to this sector of the fishing industry. It seeks to achieve this objective by adopting a community-based, co-management approach. The Policy accordingly envisages that fishing rights will be allocated to small-scale fishing communities and that these communities will become involved in managing fisheries together with government.

This contribution reviews and critically analyses the scope of application of the Small-Scale Policy and the management approach adopted by the Policy, with a view to assessing its potential to achieve the objective of providing redress to the formerly marginalised groups of fishers. This analysis takes place against the backdrop of the significant resource constraints in the fisheries arena and the

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country's vision for its future economic development as described in the *National Development Plan*.

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