**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1051 / NW1181E**

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES:**

**Mr R K Purdon (DA) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

**QUESTION:**

(1)      (a) What is the total number of years that a certain person (name furnished) has had the license to catch octopuses in False Bay,

(b) what are rates of each ton caught for the duration of the license and

(c) to which countries are octopuses marketed;

(2)      has the specified person provided his department with data relating to (a) the size of each catch, (b) the sex ratio, (c) seasonal fluctuations, (d) depth differences and

(e) local community training; if not, why not; if so, will he provide Mr R K Purdon with the data for 2017;

(3)      (a) what is the total number of (i) boat trips and (ii) factory visits that his department has undertaken to assess the validity of any data provided and

(b) why has no assessment been done in nine years since data had been collected;

(4)      whether the specified person will be granted an extended five-year licence from February 2018 and

 (b) by what date will his department decide on the viability of an octopus fishery in (i) False Bay and/ (ii) anywhere else on the South African coastline?   **NW1181E**

**REPLY:**

(1)(a) The first phase of the experimental fishery ran for 5 years from 2004 until 2009.  The permit holder held permits in this fishery, along with a further 14 permit holders in 8 areas with 2 vessels per area.  The second phase was ‘relaxed’ to an exploratory fishery for a further 5 years from 2012 until 2017 (last permit expires at the end of February 2018).  Although the exploratory fishery is set to run for 5 years, permits are issued only for 12 months at a time (this is the maximum length of time allowed for a permit to be issued under the Marine Living Resources Act).

(1)(b) Catch rates have been in the order of 600kg-1000kg per trip (typically between 8 and 20 days duration), but this varies greatly with soak times and weather conditions.

(1)(c) Market trials have been undertaken in Australia, the USA, Europe, and there has also been testing of the local market.

(2)(a-d) All of this information is captured in the mandatory catch returns which are sent to the Department after each trip.  In addition, Departmental scientists also independently verify information on size composition and sex ratio through sampling on board during fishing operations and at factory facilities.

(2)(e) Local community training is not a permit condition in this fishery, although training of skippers and crew has taken place on the initiative of the permit holder.

(3)(a) Monthly trips are undertaken either on fishing trips or to factory facilities to verify the data provided and collect additional biological data and samples.

(3)(b) There was very little fishing during the first phase of the experimental fishery, and as a result insufficient data were collected for meaningful analysis.  For the second phase, the fishery was therefore ‘relaxed’ to an exploratory fishery in an attempt to remove the obstacles that had made it difficult for permit holders to active their permits.  No assessment has been conducted as yet as the exploratory fishery still has just under a year until completion, and the assessment will be conducted once the exploratory fishery is completed and all the data are available.

(4)(a) The exploratory fishery will terminate at the end of February 2018.  Once the assessment is completed an evaluation will be made as to whether a further exploratory phase is required or whether a decision can be made regarding the likely viability of a commercial fishery.  It is recognised that the assessment may take some time, and consideration is still to be given as to whether to continue with interim exploratory fishing until the results of the assessment are available

(4)(b) All areas will be assessed at the same time with the available information, although given the distribution of data, it is likely that sufficient information for decision-making will only be available for the False Bay area.  The length of time for the assessment to be undertaken is uncertain – this will be dependent on the availability of, and workloads on, Departmental scientists in 2018.