**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITIEN REPLY**

**QUESTION: 3412**

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

**MR N Singh (IFP) to ask the of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries**

**QUESTION**

Whether, with reference to the reply by the Minister of Environmental Affairs to question 2808 on 24 August 2015 and given the large-scale exploitation of the Blacktip Shark, Bronze Whaler Shark and Dusky Shark in South Africa's fishing waters and the lack of scientific research available on the sustainability of the specified species, he will consider granting protection in the interim through regulation that the specified species may not be caught or landed within all marine protected areas along the South African coastline?

**REPLY**

**Answer tabled in Parliament on:**

**DAFF'S RESPONSE:**

Requiem sharks (common name for all the Carcharhinus species) such as the bronze whaler shark (Carcharhinus brachyurus), dusky shark (C. obscurus) and blacktip shark (C. limbatus/melanopterus) are caught as by-catch or targeted in a suite of fisheries, including the commercial linefishery, demersal shark longline fishery, pelagic longline fishery, bather protection programme, recreational linefishery, beach seine and gill net fishery, small pelagic and mid-water trawl fishery and prawn trawl fishery.

This study mentioned by the Honourable Mr. N. Singh (da Silva et al. 2015) was the first attempt by DAFF to evaluae DAFF fisheries data in an attempt to understand the effect of these fisheries on bycatch species. It informed the National Plan Of Action (NPOA) for Sharks South Africa published recently, which lists a number of tasks to be undertaken over the next few years to improve the management of chondrichthyes in South Africa. Once completed, these tasks will ensure that chondrichthyes are managed in a sustainable and responsible manner.

The most recent assessment (Dudley and Simpfendorfer 2006) on requiem sharks caught by the KZN bather protection programme, show stable catches of bronze whaler and dusky sharks between 1978 and 2003. These species represent the majority of by-catch as listed in the review by da Silva et al. 2005. Blacktip sharks do show a decline (Dudley and Simpfendorfer 2006) between 1978 and 2003. However less than 10 t (dressed weight) on average of blacktip sharks were reported between 2010 and 2012. Although this study represents data from catches in KZN, the bather protection programme is a good indication of long-term trends due to standardized fishing procedures. Declines have been shown for other species caught by the KZN bather protection programme, and this has been used in the past to inform management strategies. Therefore there is little evidence to suggest that overharvesting of these species is occurring. These trends continue to be evaluated by the scientists based at the KZN Sharks Board.

DAFF research on sharks is currently directed at the 4 main shark species caught as target in the highest quantities. These include the smoothhound shark (Mustelus mustelus), soupfin shark (Galeorhinus galeus), shortfin mako shark {lsurus oxyrinchus) and blue sharks (Prionace glauca). Over the next 5 years the Department will be evaluating the list of 99 of 204 South African chondrichthyes caught in commercial fisheries in South Africa to select the next set of species for directed research. This is set out in the NPOA for sharks.

CLASSIFICATION: Confidential

SUBJECT: ANSWER: Question 3412 for written reply: National Assembly to ask Minister for Agriculture,

Forestry and Fisheries