

Appendix 3. The final scenario stories

The starting point

It is 2018, and South Africa's new Small-Scale Fisheries Policy is slowly and systematically implemented throughout coastal communities. However, fishers are optimistic about the possibilities that the successful implementation of the policy will mean for them and their communities. The opportunity to participate in a community co-operative and directly benefit from the sale of fish and other livelihood activities poses an opportunity to promote and cultivate more sustainable livelihoods. This enables fishers to grow personal wealth and also for the overall improvement of Melkhoutfontein.

The present-day situation finds fishers with limited access to marine resources and little to no disposable income. Most small-scale fishers act as crew on linefishery boats. The demand for 'a site' on a boat is high as the demand for crew has steadily become less as skippers/commercial rights holders leave the fishery. Implementing the small-scale fisheries policy has also created some conflict amongst skippers and crew. Some small-scale fishers lose their 'site' on boats just because their names appear on the provisional list of verified small-scale fishers. Small-scale fishers in the community do not currently hold Interim Relief rights with access to fish in the river also blocked by regulation. Although fishers are optimistic about the policy and its implementation, there is also much uncertainty about the future. Most of this uncertainty is around the basket of species allocated as part of the community right or co-operative. Implementation timelines are also uncertain, and many deadlines and implementation targets have already been delayed. Conditions in the biophysical environment are also highly variable and not optimal. Fishers are only able to fish a couple of days a month as sea days have become scarce. Sea surface temperature, wind direction and strength, and current direction and strength are not within the optimal ranges.

The present economic conditions mean that employment is scarce, and living is expensive. Fishing is lucrative when the fish bite, but catches are not plentiful even when fishers manage to fish. It is not entirely clear why the kob has become so scarce, although the activities of the Inshore Trawl sector are thought by many to play a vital role. In the meantime, fishers engage in a variety of alternative livelihood activities. They do not make much money, and although they struggle to make ends meet, they do manage to get by. Current livelihood activities are wide-ranging, with fishers drawing on their current, often limited, skillsets. Activities include the gathering and selling of firewood, gardening, reed harvesting, housework and building labor.

Scenario 1 - "Nothing much has changed"

This is a story about limited opportunities in a resource-constrained environment where a broad set of circumstances severely limits economic growth on micro - and macro-scales. The chaotic implementation of the Small-Scale Fisheries Policy has led to a situation where, 30 years later, small-scale fishers are left with little to no access to marine resources. Not much has changed since 2017, and it is unclear when these persisting issues will end or be addressed meaningfully. The government has been forced to repeatedly extend the interim relief policy of the 2000s to provide some access to marine resources. However, obtaining Interim Relief permits is complex. Many fishers active in 2017 have passed on or retired, with the few new entrants to the fishery borne out of necessity in the absence of other employment opportunities. The few remaining fishers from Melkhoutfontein still try to engage in interim livelihood activities where possible, although many do not have permits. They also continue to crew on

linefish boats. However, more fishers require work as crew than there are available 'sites', and most fishers do 'odd' jobs where they can.

Linefish (specifically kob and silvers) catches have continued to decline slowly over the past 30 years. No new commercially viable species have moved into the niche created by the decline of the primary target species. As a result, fishers continue to target kob/silvers when they can, supplementing income with informal activities and employment outside the fishery to sustain basic livelihoods. The weather and climate are highly variable, with the Western Cape becoming increasingly drier over the past 30 years. Although the southern Cape is not impacted as severely as the rest of the province, an increase in population and a highly variable local climate place an additional burden on agriculture and other water-intensive activities. The cost of mitigating the long-term impacts of these climate-driven impacts adds strain to the already struggling provincial and national fiscus, adding pressure to the already struggling economy.

The South African economy has continued to grow slowly, and disposable income is constrained due to low growth and limited local employment opportunities. Nevertheless, Melkhoutfontein has continued to expand due to the government works program (fulfilling housing demand by building RDP housing¹). Due to the high demand for houses and as the area's population has increased, this long-term project ensured that Melkhoutfontein had grown steadily over the last 30 years to become a fully-fledged town with the necessary infrastructure and services associated with an established rural town. However, investments from residents and private companies remain low, thereby constraining development. In addition, the town struggles with the social ills associated with low socio-economic development levels, such as substance abuse. Therefore, it remains challenging to escape the poverty trap in which most people find themselves.

Scenario 2 - "We will get there –eventually."

This is a story about cautious optimism. Although fisher attrition rates have been high, implementing the small-scale fisheries policy in 2019 has resulted in the establishment of primary and secondary co-operatives, with new entrants steadily entering the co-operatives as needed. However, prevailing economic conditions at the time of policy implementation mean that fishers never received the initial capital injection needed to get the co-operatives up and running correctly; as a lack of access to fishing gear and funds to acquire and maintain gear being the biggest obstacle to successfully exploiting the community right. Fishers are thus forced to, in addition to limited, small-scale activities, continue crewing on commercial linefish boats. However, employment opportunities on these boats remain limited as there is more available crew than required. The current situation in the southern Cape Linefishery continues as has been for the last 30 years - kob and silver catches are sporadic and are landed when available. Although catches remain relatively low, fishers catch enough fish to 'get by' and while they engage in outside livelihood activities to supplement income; the 'die-hard' fishers do not leave the fishery. However, small-scale fishers can harvest enough resources to feed the family (at the very least), which frees up some income for other activities.

¹ RDP housing is a commonly used term for social housing, provided by the South Africa government to poor households.

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Scenario 3 - "The going is good."

This is a story about growth and prosperity. Although the small-scale fisheries policy was successfully implemented in 2019, fishers cannot successfully exploit their rights at the scale required to sustain and improve their livelihoods. Cooling on the Agulhas bank has increased upwelling resulting in traditional upwelling associated species such as Yellowtail becoming increasingly abundant. Although other linefish species are available to target in the absence of kob and silver, catches are not big enough to sustain a fishery-derived income. As a result, fishers who wish to continue engaging in fishery activities are forced to seek employment in the growing industrialized fishing sector in the area – either as crew on trawlers or in the fish processing plants.

However, the increase in the availability of commercially exploitable fish was gradual, and fishers could get both their primary and secondary co-operatives up and running. These co-operatives were managed sustainably with the secondary co-operative, focusing on the direct marketing of fish and engaging in alternative livelihood activities in times of fish scarcity. Fishers have thus, over the last 30 years, managed to accumulate capital. Coupled with this, a shift in macroeconomic policy after the 2019 elections has resulted in South Africa experiencing better growth, positively impacting the unemployment rate. The southern Cape weather and climate remain highly variable, with the western Cape becoming increasingly drier over time. Pro-active planning from all levels of government means that although there are additional associated costs of mitigating long-term climate-driven impacts, the burgeoning economy means that the government can carry many of the mitigation costs. Better access to capital and funding has resulted in fishers being able to diversify outside the fishery. Most have moved away from engaging in grassroots livelihood activities to set up small business enterprises mainly concerned with service provision. Examples of such business include fixing boats, buying and selling fish (as middlemen), setting up a hair salon, selling tackle and other boating equipment, expanding a current mixed agriculture farm, care provision. Most of these businesses employ at least two/three local community members.

The government has continued providing primary housing through the public works project initiated in the 2010s, with all housing requirements being met. As more capital/funding is available in the town, many community members have enough disposable income to improve their homes. As there are more businesses in the town, a formal business district has developed, and the town has increasingly urbanized as infrastructure expanded. Public facilities such as schools have been improved (specifically as higher school fees can be collected). The improvements to the town have led to the migration of people from other towns seeking new opportunities, and tourism to the area has also increased. In general, Melkhoutfontein has seen a steady improvement in socio-economic conditions, resulting in better food security and the well-being of fishers and the town.

Scenario 4 – "The future is bright."

This is a story about growth, prosperity and personal satisfaction. Warming in the Agulhas bank has triggered south (west) ward migration of warm temperate fish species. As a result, line fishers easily changed their target species without significant shifts in strategy and fishery structure. However, the government was proactive in creating an enabling environment to encourage the continued participation of these fishers. Supported by the successful implementation of the small-scale fisheries policy, fishers have been able to sustain and advance livelihoods with their fishery derived as their only and most significant sources of income. Thus, over the last 30 years, Fishers have managed to accumulate enough wealth to engage with various economic activities proactively. Coupled with this, a significant shift in macroeconomic policy after the 2019 elections has resulted in South Africa experiencing significant long-term economic growth resulting in record-low unemployment rates.

The southern Cape weather and climate remain highly variable, with the Western Cape province becoming increasingly drier. However, the southern Cape is not impacted as severely as the rest of the province, although an increase in population and a highly variable local climate place an additional burden on agriculture and other water-intensive activities. With the booming economy, proactive planning means that the government easily bears mitigation and risk aversion costs with projects creating an opportunity for innovation and employment.

Better access to capital and funding has resulted in fishers diversifying inside and outside the fishery. As a result, most have moved away from engaging in grassroots livelihood activities to set up small business enterprises. However, many generational fishers have chosen to remain engaged with fishing-related activities or businesses by planning their livelihood activities around deriving a fishing-related income. For those who opted to keep on fishing, the presence of disposable capital means that they can afford skipper training, boats and related equipment. Thus, they both catch and market their fish while employing crew from the community.

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migration of people from other towns seeking new opportunities, tourism to the area has also increased. In general, Melkhoutfontein has seen a steady improvement in socio-economic conditions, resulting in better food security and the well-being of fishers and the town in general.