

Code of Responsible Fishing

The South African Pelagic Fishing Industry Association, SAPFIA (*"The Association"*) is a legally recognized industrial body which represents a large number of rights holders who hold approximately 68% of sardine rights and 79% of anchovy rights in the small pelagic fishing sector.

SAPFIA is committed to the achievement of sustainability in the small pelagic fishery and the ecosystems within which it is conducted. The Association has therefore developed a Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing Operations as an important step in pursuit of this objective. The SAPFIA Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing outlines general principles and guidelines for all commercial small pelagic fishing operations that take place in South African waters in which we as SAPFIA members participate.

The Code is an important tool for fisheries management and, although it is voluntary, all members of the Association which is concerned with the management and development of the small pelagic fishery, and conservation of fishery resources, are actively encouraged to implement it. It is important in developing an overarching code to ensure that it does not become too onerous, thereby making fishing operations more complex or difficult and becoming merely a compliance activity with no real commitment. The Code provides an overview of the principles that guide fishing activities in the small pelagic fishing sector, along with other legislation. As applied, it will observe the laws, statutes and regulations that govern fishing operations. If a law/regulation conflicts with a policy in this Code, the law/regulation must be observed. This code in no way diminishes the FAO Code.

Principles

Principle 1: Sustainability

Sustainability means the harvesting of small pelagic fish species in such a way, and at a rate, that it does not threaten the health of the stocks, or inhibit their recovery where they have

previously been in decline, thereby maintaining their potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations of potential users. It also implies that the fishing activity does not harm the ecosystem's biodiversity or carrying capacity.

Principle 2: Compliance

The Members of the Association will conduct harvesting operations in accordance with South African fisheries' legislation and regulations; international laws, regulations, conventions, declarations and protocols adopted by South Africa; and observe the Operational Management Procedures adopted for the sector and their associated by-catch, where applicable.

Principle 3: Waste Reduction

To the extent practical, members of the Association will avoid unintended by-catch and discards and reduce waste and adverse impacts on the marine ecosystems and habitats to ensure healthy stocks.

Principle 4: Public Awareness

Members will develop, maintain and promote public awareness and understanding of the issues surrounding responsible fishing and the measures taken by fishers to conserve stocks and protect the environment.

Principle 5: Promotion of Knowledge

Fish harvesters will promote the recognition of their specialized knowledge gained through experience, and the integration of this knowledge with scientific analyses to further understanding of the biology and population dynamics of the relevant species, by-catch and top predator species, as well as promote relevant fisheries management policies and regulations.

Overarching Guidelines

1. Fishing Gear

The Association will, through its members:

Guideline 1.1

Only allow gear that is permitted for use in the anchovy and sardine small pelagics fishery to be used, i.e. purse seines, with limitations described in the respective permit conditions.

Guideline 1.2

Support research to assess the impact of their fishing gear, and promote and utilize new fishing gear and practices which are consistent with sustainable fishing practices.

Guideline 1.3

Support migration to and/or employment of fishing practices that minimize the risk of gear loss.

Guideline 1.4

Ensure compliance with any relevant regulatory protocols for the marking, retrieving and reporting of lost gear.

Guideline 1.5

Report and make reasonable efforts to retrieve lost fishing gear.

2. Environment

The Association will:

Guideline 2.1

Practice environmentally sound waste management in all aspects of harvesting operations.

Guideline 2.2

Optimize energy consumption in fishing operations where possible.

Guideline 2.3

Adopt practices that minimize emissions of dangerous substances arising from harvesting operations to meet national standards where these exist.

Guideline 2.3

Contribute to the establishment of fisheries policies and management plans in full consultation with management and other regulatory agencies to ensure conservation of fish resources and protection of the environment.

Guideline 2.4

Recognize and support efforts to balance the economic needs of fish harvesters and industry with the short- and long-term needs of resource and environmental sustainability.

3. Fishing operations

The Association will:

Guideline 3.1

Co-operate with government fisheries managers and scientists from government, NGOs and the private sector to develop policies and action plans for sustainable fishing operations.

Guideline 3.2

Assist with the establishment of effective mechanisms to ensure consultation and active participation of fish harvesters in the planning, development, conservation, and management

of South African fisheries, recognizing that full co-operation among gear sectors and species-specific fisheries will facilitate conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.

Guideline 3.3

Acknowledge and embrace the interdependence of harvesting operations and fisheries management.

Guideline 3.4

Cooperate with fisheries management to integrate and balance the experience, expertise, and acquired knowledge of practicing professional fish harvesters with the best fisheries management practices and scientific research available.

4. Training and Development

The Association will:

Guideline 4.1

Assist in the development of and participate in education and training programs that emphasize responsible fishing and sustainable development practices.

Guideline 4.2

Promote the development of education and training programs designed to enhance the skills required for responsible fishing activities and operations, adapted to the small pelagics fishery.

5. Scientific management, cooperation and research

The Association will:

Guideline 5.1

Participate in the planning and implementation of research and assessment initiatives aimed at protecting the biodiversity of marine ecosystems and their habitats.

Guideline 5.2

Assist in collection and provision of research and assessment data related to fishing activities, where feasible.

Guideline 5.3

Support research initiatives aimed at minimizing adverse impacts to the resource and the environment.

Guideline 5.4

Commit to avoid destructive fishing practices, defined as:

- overfishing beyond reasonable recovery limits, including serial overfishing;
- excessive or damaging levels of bycatch and discards;
- the overfishing of spawning aggregations without precautionary justification and measures;
- intensive fishing over vulnerable habitats, including for example nursery areas and unique habitats; and
- deliberate (or illegal) destruction of marine life perceived as “getting in the way” of fishing operations

Commit to reporting any observed illegal activities in this regard.

NOTE ON OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THIS CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code will be a "living document" subject to continuing review and discussion.

The Code will be managed by the Executive Committee of SAPFIA.