

**DISCUSSION SESSION DURING INTERNATIONAL STOCK ASSESSMENT
WORKSHOP**

Wednesday 2 December, 4-00 to 5-30 pm

DEFINING THE SCOPE OF EAF

**A Discussion arising from the WWF August 2015 Workshop: “Tracking
Implementation of an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) in South Africa”**

PROGRAMME

- 1) Presentation 1: EAF – time to drop the term? - Doug Butterworth – +-20 minutes
- 2) Presentation 2: EAF – who said it would be easy? – Kevern Cochrane +- 20 minutes
- 3) Comments from International Panel members, with reference to situations elsewhere -
+- 15 minutes
- 4) Comments from a small panel of local scientists and stakeholders - +-10 minutes
- 5) Audience discussion - +- 25 minutes

Moderator: John Duncan (WWF)

Venue: UCT – Zoology Lecture Theatre 2

Summary:

Like many other leading fishing nations, South Africa is committed to implementing an Ecosystems Approach to Fisheries (EAF) which is broadly defined as:

“A management approach for fisheries which strives to balance diverse societal objectives, by taking into account the knowledge and uncertainties about biotic, abiotic and human components of ecosystems and their interactions and applying an integrated approach to fisheries within ecologically meaningful boundaries.” (FAO 2003).

A primary implication of this approach is the need to cater both for ecosystem as well as broader aspects of human well-being. This approach implies conservation of ecosystem structures, processes and interactions through sustainable use. Inevitably this requires considering a range of frequently conflicting objectives where the needed consensus may not be readily attained without equitable distribution of benefits. In general, the tools and techniques of EAF remain the same as those used in traditional fisheries management, but they need to be applied in a manner that addresses the wider interactions between fisheries and the whole ecosystem

While South Africa has made appreciable progress in implementing an EAF over the last decade, like many other countries we face ongoing challenges in operationalising the all-encompassing nature of this approach. Key among these challenges have been definitional interpretations of the scope of the

EAF and how to operationalise it in such a way as to ensure that those tasked with its implementation are able and capacitated to do so effectively. As a result, there are those who believe that the term has become too vague, broad and ambiguous to be of practical use in fisheries management, so that it is necessary now to better define and focus on the specifics of this concept if it is to deliver tangible outcomes. Others argue that an EAF is necessarily broad so as to reflect the full scope of diverse societal objectives which need to be considered in order to effectively manage intrinsically complex fishery systems.

This discussion aims to provide an opportunity for rigorous exchanges with the ultimate goal of assisting those tasked with the management of our marine resources to develop the appropriate EAF definitions and structures which will allow for more effective mainstreaming of EAF processes into existing fisheries management processes.

Presentation 1: EAF – time to drop the term? - Doug Butterworth

While the August WWF EAF workshop covered a number of “ecosystem” issues which certainly do need attention in the management of local fisheries, it also evidenced confusion regarding “What is/belongs under EAF?” (an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, aka Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management). Current definitions of EAF are all-encompassing in nature, and have moved far wider than in mind when the concept first came to some international acceptance in the late 1970s in the process of establishing the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The subsequent history is reviewed briefly, based particularly on personal involvement in initiatives. It is argued that the widespread confusion arising from a broad definition is contrary to the interests of advancing the areas of fisheries management most in need of attention and resources, to the extent that the time has now come to dispense with the term (operationally). Instead, discussion and priorities in broadening the singles species management approach to better accommodate ecosystem-related concerns should be structured around four primary components of EAF: by-catches; food-web interactions; habitat impact; and environmental/ oceanographic impacts. The “human element” does not belong amongst these, as it was already part of the singles species approach, and should continue to be taken into account there. The implications for advancing local research in terms of this structure are presented. The thesis is NOT that “ecosystem” aspects do not need attention in fisheries management; to the contrary many certainly do, but are better advanced under headings which are more readily and unambiguously understood.

Presentation 2: EAF: who said it was going to be easy? - Kevern Cochrane

The term EAF does not determine the scope of fisheries management, it merely attempts to summarise the reality in a convenient title. The reality, and hence scope of fisheries management and governance, is determined by the dynamic and often conflicting needs and expectations of society from fisheries and from the marine ecosystems in which fisheries operate. Society's rights and responsibilities in relation to the seas and oceans are contained in the UN Law of the Sea of 1982 (for example Articles, 56, 61, 116 and others). The tasks and breadth of fisheries management, at local, national and international scales, flow from those rights and responsibilities, however confusing and frustrating the complex mix may turn out to be.