

Concern over 3-year fishing permits

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SMALL-SCALE fishers in KwaZulu-Natal have raised concerns about the three-year fishing permit to be granted by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries as of next year.

They told Bheki Cele, Deputy Minister of the department, during a stormy meeting on Friday at uMtwalume, southern KZN, that they wanted an eight-year permit.

Cele's visit was a part of a cabinet imbizo focus week, a series of meetings with fishers and communities, aimed at addressing illegal fishing.

About 500 fishermen will be granted permits at Umtwalume from July.

Lindani Ngubane of Masi-fundisane Development Trust, a fishermen's organisation, was not happy with the three-year permit.

"Most customary fishermen living under traditional authorities should have been involved in the process to ensure that the policy works for them too. And we also want to be given eight-year permits," said Ngubane.

He added: "Ezemvelo KZN



Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Bheki Cele engaged the community of uMtwalume, on the South Coast, during a cabinet focus imbizo on Friday.

Wildlife also has extended the Marine Protected Areas, which means boats will not be allowed in those areas. We think there are issues to be addressed in ensuring that this policy benefits the rural communities.

While he was pleased with the progress made, he said there were loopholes in the implementation process. The verification of fishermen was unfair since traditional leaders were sidelined.

He urged the department to stop giving more licences to established fishermen, saying this was hindering radical transformation in the industry.

Another small-scale fish farmer, Busi Lubanyane, 48, from Port Shepstone, said the three-year permit would disadvantage them as small-scale fish farmers.

"It takes time to renew the permit; we spend a lot developing the fish pond. To be given three years, it will take us back to where we started. We also need to be equipped with skills," he said.

Responding, Cele said he had noted the outcry over fishing licences which had sparked clashes between the fishermen and Ezemvelo KZN wildlife in the province.