

# Regional co-operation makes economic sense



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**A**n economic study has shown that the benefits of managing the Benguela's shared fisheries resources co-operatively, far outweigh the costs of establishing and maintaining a regional management structure such as an Interim Benguela Current Commission.

The economic study was undertaken in September 2004 by Rashid Sumaila, Gordon Munro and Heather Keith of the Fisheries Economics Research Unit at the University of British Columbia.

They found that the potential for obtaining net benefits from regional co-operative management of the BCLME are "huge" and they recommend that the establishment of an Interim Benguela Current Commission (IBCC) should be pursued.

The economists suggest that there are two main benefits of regional co-operative management: it will help to minimise the wasteful use of shared stocks and it has the potential to increase catches by organising fishing in such a way that shared stocks are allowed to grow to their fullest economic potential.

Current knowledge of the BCLME indicates that the deep water hake stock (*Merluccius paradoxus*) is shared by South Africa and Namibia and the shallow water stock (*Merluccius capensis*) is also shared, if only indirectly through cannibalism of juveniles. Pilchard and horse mackerel stocks are

shared between Angola and Namibia, as are red crabs and bronze whaler sharks. Big eye, yellowfin and longfin tunas are also shared by the three countries of the BCLME, both in their respective exclusive economic zones and on the high seas.

Based on the number and value of shared stocks, and the results of economic studies that have demonstrated the benefits of managing shared stocks co-operatively, the economists believe that the regional management of the BCLME is justifiable.

They recommend that the IBCC should be implemented on a modest scale, using the experience gathered over the years from the BCLME and BENEFIT programmes. This approach, they suggest, will allow for learning and the building of confidence and mutual trust between the parties which are crucial for the success of the Commission.

A fundamental issue that must be agreed upon is how to fund the IBCC sustainably. Ultimately, the resources for running the IBCC will have to come from the region if the Commission is to be sustain-

able in the long-term. The economists recommend that current levels of funding by international donors be continued until a point in time when the national governments of Angola, Namibia and South Africa will take over the full funding of the Commission.

Other recommendations are that, when designing the structure of the IBCC, care should be taken to ensure that the sovereignty issue does not become a significant problem. Similarly, the fact that the member states are unlikely to have identical resource management goals should be taken into account.

The economists stipulate that the IBCC will require high quality, credible research and suggest that sustainable funding and strong political commitment should be at the centre of the development of the IBCC. They also recommend that the new Commission should work out a way to collaborate with international organisations such as the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO).