Namibia, SA, Angola launch fisheries project

By: NICO SMIT

BY improving knowledge of basic ecosystems processes, improving the assessment of fish stocks and involving stakeholders in the management of fisheries, the ECOSFISH project will develop a new framework for the ecosystem approach to fisheries in the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME).

Launched on Friday by Fisheries Minister, Bernard Esau, the ECOSFISH is a joint project conducted between the governments of Namibia, Angola and South Africa. ECOSFISH aims to improve the scientific assessment of hake, horse mackerel and sardine, the three fish stocks considered most important for securing the prosperity of the fishing industries of the three countries involved.

ECOSFISH will develop a new framework for an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAF) in the BCLME based on improved knowledge of basic processes in the ecosystem, and involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the management process,” Esau said.

A key principle of the EAF is that the ecosystem reaches beyond the fauna and flora of the ecosystem to the people who use its resources. As a result, the project will formally incorporate the knowledge and experience of stakeholders, including fisheries, fishing communities and fishing companies.

To be coordinated by the Benguela Current Commission (BCC), the ECOSFISH project will also involve a partnership with scientists and fisheries managers in Namibia, Angola and South Africa.

Also speaking at the launch of the project was Dr Hashali Hamukuuya, Executive Secretary of the BCC, said that ECOSFISH will largely improve the capacity of the three countries to “generate new data and better process existing data. For example, ECOSFISH is expected to improve the collection of socio-economic data, and ensure that the knowledge of fisheries and fishing communities is taken into account, thereby improving fisheries management.”

Funded by the European Union with a grant of N$14.8 million, the ECOSFISH project is expected to help the BCC reconcile some of the key scientific questions around hake, horse mackerel and sardinella.