



WEEKEND ARGUSNEWS

Lawrence Muroma and Quen Feng were sentenced. image supplied

Abalone smugglers sentenced while authorities say drugs are often linked to the trade

By Genevieve Serra 11h ago

Cape Town – Two men who were caught with R9 million rand worth of abalone have been sentenced to a year behind bars while authorities have warned this is still a very serious crime being committed and is often linked to the drug trade.

Just last week, while members of the K9 Unit and the City's Task Team were out on patrol, they found 17 324 abalone inside a car in Gansbaai.

This week, two men, Lawrence Muroma, and Quen Feng, were sentenced to a year behind bars after they pleaded guilty at the Cape Town Regional Court.

They pleaded guilty to charges relating to the illegal abalone trade.

The duo were arrested on May 17 during a joint operation with the Directorate of Priority Crime Investigation's Serious Organised Crime Investigation team and the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and Crime Intelligence.

The Hawks', Zinzi Hani said the men were found with abalone of more than R9 million.

“Two vehicles, a truck and a sedan were stopped and a search was conducted. The team confiscated more than R50 000 cash, 23 896 units of dried abalone in a false compartment inside the truck and an Audi A3 vehicle,” she said. “The duo pleaded guilty on all charges which include money laundering, landing, selling and transportation of illegal abalone.



The Hawks busted two suspects on the N7 highway in the direction of Malmesbury with abalone worth more than R9 million. Photo: Hawks

Inspector Wayne Dyason of the City’s Law Enforcement told Weekend Argus abalone poaching was still a huge problem in the Western Cape: “Poaching of abalone along the city’s coastline remains a serious problem and the City, through its Marine and Environmental Unit, remains committed to assisting the primary role-players in the fight against this scourge.

“There have been many successes in this joint approach but much more remains to be done.

“The specialised Marine and Environmental Law Enforcement Unit was established in 2013 and its focus has been marine and coastal law enforcement, including inshore boat patrols.

“Through the Implementation Protocol with DAFF, City Law Enforcement officers were trained and appointed as fishery control officers in terms of the Marine Living Resources Act 18 of 1998, with full powers.”

While MEC for Community Safety, Albert Fritz said often abalone and drugs trade were crimes that were committed together and were linked.

He commended teams making arrests recently in Grabouw where thousands of rand of abalone were confiscated

“I am delighted to acknowledge the excellent work of all our partners in making the Overstrand safer,” he said.

“As we fund the K9 Unit, we are especially proud of their contributions to the successes realised over the past seven days; but we are really thankful to all our partners, including the local law enforcement units and neighbourhood watches.

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