Chinese national sentenced for smuggling abalone

Qiang Chen was sentenced in the Atlantis Regional Court. Photo: Hawks

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A Chinese national has been sentenced in the Atlantis Regional Court after he was convicted of smuggling abalone.

Qiang Chen, 29, entered into a plea and sentencing agreement with the State.

In 2021, Chen was bust allegedly running an abalone facility in Melkbosstrand.

He was sentenced to a fine of R1 million or five years direct imprisonment which was wholly suspended for a period of five years for contravening Section 18 (1) if the Marine Living Resources Act.

For contravening Regulation 36 (1) of the Marine Living Resources Act he was sentenced to a fine of R250,000 or three years imprisonment which was wholly suspended for a period of five years.

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In terms of Section 18 of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (Poca) the court ordered a confiscation amount of R150,000.

All abalone and equipment was also forfeited to the State in terms of Section 35 of the Criminal Procedure Act 51.

The Western Cape spokesperson for the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (known as Hawks) Lieutenant Colonel Siyabulela Vukubi said the sentencing was a result of an operation conducting in October by members of the Hawks' Serious Organised Crime Investigation with the department of forestry, fisheries and the Environment and Crime Intelligence.

“They collectively followed up on information that certain premises in Melkbosstrand were being utilized as an abalone processing facility. Based on that information an intelligence-driven operation was conducted,” Vukubi said.

“Mr Chen was then arrested during the search and seizure operation for illegally operating a fish processing establishment. During the search, 5,206 dried abalone were seized as well as abalone processing equipment that were found on the premises.”

The provincial head of the Hawks, Major General Mathipa Makgato welcomed the sentencing and applauded all members involved for their swift response to the valuable information.

Makgato further encouraged members of the public to continue supplying information to the police.

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