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Two fined for R6.5m abalone seizure in Welgemoed

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Two men who were found with abalone worth over R6,5 million in Welgemoed have been slapped with hefty fines.

The two Chinese nationals, Chaoyuan He (28) and Jie Jun Liang (27), entered into a plea agreement with the state last Monday 15 April at the Khayelitsha Priority Court.

This follows a lengthy investigation which started in October 2021 when members of the Hawks' Serious Organised Crime Investigation team based in Bellville, Crime Intelligence Counter Narcotics and Gangs Western Cape as well as Department of Forestry, Fishery and the Environment searched a premises in Welgemoed.

"On arrival at the premises, it was established that the premises was used as an illegal fish processing facility," Zinzi Hani, Hawks spokesperson, says.

"They discovered and seized 11 321 units of dried abalone with an estimated value of approximately R6,5 million."

Four suspects were arrested, He and Liang, and two other men who were found on the premises.

"They were eventually arrested and charged for operating an illegal fish processing establishment and illegal possession of abalone. After several court appearances, all four accused were granted bail," Hani says.

Sentence

He and Liang were both sentenced for two contraventions of the Marine Living Resources Act. In both these charges the sentence was R1 000 000 or five years imprisonment, which is wholly suspended for a period of five years.

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They are therefore both expected to pay R2 million or spend 10 years in jail.

Liang was also sentenced on a third charge, which relates to contraventions of the immigration act. For this he was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment wholly suspended for a period of five years.

The court also confiscated R200 000 from He, an amount he benefited from the crime.

He was ordered to pay the amount into the Criminal Asset Recovery Account (Cara).

Similarly the court confiscated R50 000 from Liang, who is also ordered to pay the amount into the Cara.

The case against the other two suspects, William Richard Munetsi (30) and Talnaka Basierawere (27), was postponed to 9 May to finalise plea agreements.

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