

# Abalobi's 'Fish With A Story' makes sourcing local, traceable seafood easier

By Robin Fredericks

22 Jul 2022

South African-based, global social enterprise, Abalobi has unveiled a new convenience range of deli products.

The new convenience deli range takes its place alongside Abalobi's traditional offering of fresh, whole 'Catch of the day' fish - and fish-related pantry products from the various communities including sea-lettuce salt, rollmops and bokkom biltong - all available for order via the app. Important to note is that small-scale fishing is extremely seasonal, with small boats only being able to venture out to sea when the conditions are good.



Source: Supplied

The new range of filleted or portioned 'Fish With A Story' is delivered vacuum-packed and blast-frozen for guaranteed freshness and includes the Cape Bream, Yellowtail, Carpenter and Southern Mullet (Harder).

These products allow customers to support fishers along our coastlines by buying the deli products throughout the year or even stocking up ahead of a cold front.

Serge Raemakers, founder and MD, says that while the brand remains committed to the concept of supplying whole fresh fish, the range of Fish With A Story deli products seeks to add an element of convenience to the responsible eating mix.

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Iain Campbell, head of Marketplace, adds that for many home cooks, the prospect of filleting and deboning a whole fish can be daunting. For those looking to eat responsibly without having to work on their knife skills, the new range allows Abalobi to remain true to its core ethos while minimising wastage and retaining the ultimate freshness of our excellent South African seafood. All offcuts are also used throughout ABALOBI's multi-channel marketplace and community initiatives.

Campbell says that blast-freezing freezes fresh fish, on the day it is caught, is much faster than an ordinary home freezer, adding that the process locks in the key qualities and nutrients to ensure that when the product is defrosted, the fish appears like it was never frozen and the taste, texture, colour and nutritional make-up are uncompromised.

Here we chat with Raemakers and Campbell to find out more about Abalobi's 'Fish With A Story'.

#### **■ Tell us about 'Fish With A Story' – what inspired it?**

**Raemakers:** Fish With a Story is fully traceable, premium quality local seafood harvested by small-scale fishermen and women using low-impact, traditional fishing methods. This seafood is supplied directly to consumers via a fair and transparent digital marketplace and traceability technology powered by Abalobi.



We are a social enterprise driven by a passionate and diverse team of scientists, small-scale fishers and fisheries experts among others. Our mission is to contribute towards thriving, equitable, climate change resilient and sustainable small-scale fishing communities globally, through the joint development of Technology For Good.

#### **■ What makes 'Fish With A Story' different?**

**Raemakers:** Many fisheries claim to offer 'sustainable' or 'ethically sourced' seafood but where is the proof? Fish With a Story is different thanks to the technology co-developed between Abalobi and the fishers themselves. Through our technology - essentially a suite of apps - we enable small-scale fishing communities to activate Community-Supported Fisheries (CSF) that promote fair market access, transparent supply chains, and broader food security. In South Africa, Fish With A Story represents the implementation of this CSF model.

**Campbell:** The Fisher app allows fishers to accurately record and monitor all the catch data from their fishing expedition.

Once processed, buyers can then order Fish with a Story via the Marketplace app, (seeing on their invoice breakdown that it is the fisher who receives the lion's share of the profit) and scan the unique traceability QR code that comes with each order to discover what species your fish is, when, where and how it was caught and importantly who caught it!

### **■ How is it helping small-scale fishing communities? In which ways.**

**Campbell:** By supporting Fish With A Story, consumers can contribute to the upliftment of coastal communities and participate in an ever-growing movement to rethink and develop a more sustainable food system. Our technologies and programmes poise small-scale fishers for social, economic and ecological sustainability. We believe in participatory fisheries rebuilding strategies that consider ocean life and livelihoods.

**Raemakers:** More than R10m has flowed directly back into the fishing communities of the Western Cape in the past year alone. Financial security is on the increase for most of the fishing communities we support, but we also see a deep sense of pride that is returning - that the time, energy and passion traditional fishermen and women put into their jobs is not wasted - indeed it is deemed as truly valuable and crucially important when considering long term environmental and social sustainability in small scale fishing communities.



### **■ Tell us about the QR scan on the packaging – how does it work?**

**Campbell:** There are two QR codes on each packet of deli Fish with a Story - one takes you to our inspirational recipes page on the website where you can find the perfect way to cook your chosen fish, and the other takes you to the STORY behind your fish. Scan it to find out exactly where your particular species was caught, how, when, and by whom. The inclusion of this QR code is how we practice what we preach and truly bring the meaning of traceability to life.



### **■ Where can we purchase the 'Fish With A Story' deli products?**

**Campbell:** You can order directly from the app store (download the '[Abalobi Marketplace](#)' app from the Apple App Store or Google Play) - Choose between fresh Catch of the Day (supply is dependent on current fishing conditions) or our new Deli convenience range of blast frozen filleted or portioned fish pieces.

Delivery is within the Western Cape only currently, and direct to your door three times a week.

Furthermore, we are working hard to increase national distribution by getting our deli products listed with retailers throughout the country... watch this space!

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