

# Scientists meet to review fall in hake stocks

THE WORLD'S best fish stock assessment scientists are meeting at the University of Cape Town this week to review the management of commercially important hake stocks off the South African and Namibian coasts.

Hake is the most important fish in both countries, but both countries' industries are currently experiencing poor catches.

Of particular interest to the scientists is some evidence suggesting that deep-sea hake - there is also a shallow water species - is a shared stock between the two countries.

This week's workshop is part-funded by the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem Programme.

This is a joint initiative by the governments of Angola, Namibia and South Africa to manage and utilise

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resources of the Benguela ecosystem in a sustainable and integrated manner.

The productive waters of the ecosystem support a number of commercially exploited fish - including hake, anchovy, pilchard, horse mackerel, tuna and snoek - as well as rock lobster in the south and shrimp and deep-sea crab in the north.

"Although the three countries have policies, legislation and structures for managing their own parts of the Benguela ecosystem - their exclusive economic zones - a co-ordinated approach is needed to deal with problems and issues that occur across national boundaries to ensure that the ecosys-

tem is managed as a whole," said spokeswoman Claire Attwood.

"These trans-boundary issues include the migration or straddling of valuable fish stocks across national boundaries, the introduction of invasive alien species via the ballast water of ships moving through the region, and pollutants or harmful algal blooms that can be moved by winds and currents from the waters of one country into another."

Part of the programme's role was to facilitate management of trans-boundary stocks such as hake between South Africa, Namibia and Angola, Attwood added.

"So the research recommendations that come out of the UCT workshop this week are likely to inform some of the fisheries projects that the programme funds in the future."