

MOZAMBIQUE MOVE A THREAT TO NATAL FISHERMEN

THE R10-million Natal fishing industry faces a crisis situation following the impounding in Maputo, Mozambique, of the Durban fishing trawler, Morning Star.

Faced with the possibility of no further fishing being permitted in the lucrative Mozambique waters, members of the Natal Trawling Association will be meeting the Deputy Minister of Fisheries, Mr John Wiley, on Friday to discuss this threat.

It is widely believed that if Mozambique imposes a heavy fine on the captain of the Morning Star for allegedly poaching within that country's 200-mile (320-km) economic zone, then many Durban fishing companies may collapse.

It has already been

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decided, at a meeting of the NTA yesterday afternoon, that unless an agreement between South Africa and Mozambique is reached, no further fishing in that country's waters will be allowed.

Already one owner, Mr Raul Quintas of Mechaweld Trawlers, has said that if he can no longer fish in Mozambique his company will close.

This point was echoed by the owner of the Morning Star, Mr Aubrey Shooter, who warned that conditions off the Natal coast would support few of the 15 boats of the NTA.

Mr Des Nel, vice-chairman of the NTA,

said the capture of the Morning Star was a shock to the industry.

"If Mozambique bans all South African fishing within 200 miles off its coastline then there is going to be a lot of hardship for the industry."

It is clear from speaking to many of the owners of trawling companies that the Mozambique coast is vital to the pink prawn, langoustine and crayfish industry.

If all commercial fishing had to be concentrated in Natal's waters then the price of such shellfish as supplied to Durban and Johannesburg would probably rise dramatically with the resulting shortfall in tonnage.