

02 July 2025

## **Dried Abalone Compulsory Specification (VC9108) Gazetted by the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition**

On the recommendation of the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS), the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition has gazetted the Compulsory Specification for Dried Abalone (VC9108) under Section 13(4) of the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications Act (Act 5 of 2008). The specification introduces mandatory compliance measures for all dried abalone products intended for export, with the primary goal of safeguarding the sustainability of South Africa's legal abalone industry.

### **Strengthening Legality and Traceability**

The regulation requires all dried abalone products to carry a valid health certificate issued by the NRCS. This critical measure ensures full traceability of abalone from farm to fork and prohibits the export of illegally harvested, confiscated, or unregulated abalone. By eliminating avenues for poached or illegally reprocessed abalone to enter legal markets, the new specification strengthens enforcement and supports ethical trade.

### **Protecting the Legal Industry**

South Africa's abalone farming industry has invested over R3 billion over the past 20 years, supporting more than 2,300 sustainable jobs in the aquaculture sector. However, this legitimate industry continues to face mounting challenges due to the influx of illegal abalone exports, which exceed 2,000 tonnes per year, compared to only 1,000 tonnes of legally farmed production. The availability of uncertified, lower-quality products on global markets has devalued South Africa's premium abalone offering and undermined the industry's credibility. This regulation aims to level the playing field, protect jobs, and sustain long-term sector viability.

### **Securing Export Markets and Enhancing Food Safety**

All exporters are now required to ensure their dried abalone shipments carry valid health certification. The industry is mobilising a coordinated strategy to notify import authorities and global buyers of the new requirements, encouraging them to only accept certified abalone products. This is expected to give legal South African exporters a competitive edge, while also mitigating public health risks associated with uncertified products entering international food systems.

### **Compliance Pressure and Business Implications**

Businesses involved in the processing and export of dried abalone must now align fully with NRCS standards, including undergoing regular inspections and reporting any changes to processing. Failure to comply may result in operational suspensions, reputational damage, and loss of access to export markets. While this adds a compliance burden, it is ultimately an investment in credibility, market access, and sustainability for those operating within the law.

In conclusion, the Compulsory Specification for Dried Abalone (VC9108) represents a critical regulatory milestone in securing the integrity and future of the abalone industry. This comprehensive approach represents a critical step in combating marine resource crimes that have cost South Africa billions in lost revenue while strengthening the legal aquaculture sector's sustainability and global competitiveness.

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