



## FACT SHEET

### POTATO BASS

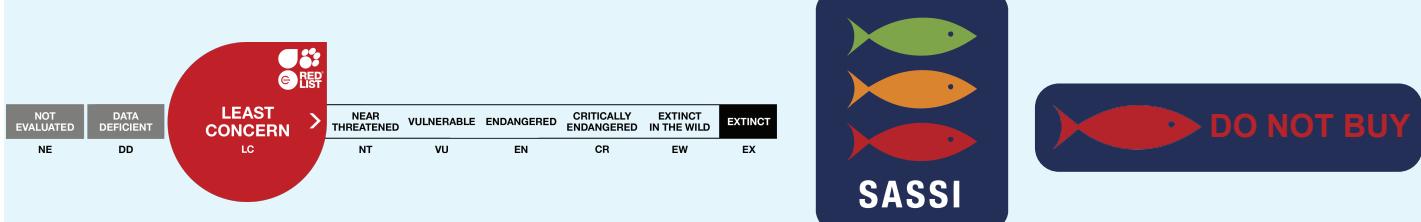
*Epinephelus tukula*

**Family:** Serranidae

**Other common names:** Potato grouper, Aartapel-baars

<b>Description</b>	A large, robust rockcod distinguished by the large, widely spaced dark brown blotches (that look like potatoes) on a light brown body. The mouth is extremely big. Can change to a darker or lighter colour depending on its behavioural mood.
<b>Distribution</b>	Widely distributed in the Indo-West Pacific: Red Sea and East Africa to southern Japan and northern Australia. In South African waters they are known to occur as far south as the Protea Banks off Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal.
<b>Habitat</b>	Reef-associated species with adults mainly found on deep reefs, seamounts, and other current-prone areas in 10-400 m. Juveniles are found on shallow subtidal reefs, often in the surf-zone.
<b>Feeding</b>	Diet includes a variety of reef fish, crustaceans and rays.
<b>Movement</b>	Tagging results show that this is a highly resident reef fish species. They may undertake seasonal movements to spawning aggregation sites similar to other grouper species, but this has yet to be determined.

Reproduction	They reach maturity at approximately 90 cm total length and probably change sex from female to male, but this still needs to be verified. Spawning occurs during spring and summer probably in northern KwaZulu-Natal and southern Mozambique waters. Spawning aggregations have been observed off the Seychelles.
Age and growth	They can reach a maximum size of 200 cm total length and a weight of 77.8 kg. They have been aged to a maximum of 26 years in the Seychelles.
Current status	Potato bass have not been assessed in South African waters. However, historical observations by spearfishermen along the KwaZulu-Natal coast suggested that numbers had declined substantially prompting the Natal Underwater Union to motivate for their protection back in 1974. This species has been fully protected in South African waters since 1992. They have been evaluated as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List (2018). South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Red.



Capture	Once abundant on inshore reefs in northern KwaZulu-Natal, this species was overexploited particularly by spearfishermen due to their large size, trophy status and the fact that this species is inquisitive and easy to approach underwater. The proclamation of the St Lucia and Maputaland MPAs in 1979 and 1986 respectively (now part of the iSimangaliso MPA) have resulted in a strong recovery of this species.
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Current recreational fishing regulations	<b>Daily bag limit:</b> Zero <b>Minimum size limit:</b> None <b>Closed Season:</b> None <b>Other regulations:</b> Prohibited species <b>Marine protected areas (MPAs):</b> This species has been shown to benefit from protection in the iSimangaliso MPA. They are also likely to benefit from protection in the Ponto do Ouro, Aliwal Shoal and Protea Bank MPAs.
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Reference	Information from the ORI Fish App. <a href="http://www.saambr.org.za">www.saambr.org.za</a>
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