

# Adapting to emerging challenges in the Asia-Pacific: APFIC Consultative Forum holds useful meet in Manado, Indonesia

Many of the new and emerging challenges to fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific were discussed at the Second Regional Consultative Forum Meeting (RCFM) of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC), held in Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, from 6-9 August, 2008.

Participants exchanged ideas, experiences and insights on challenges in the fisheries sector. Some valuable recommendations emerged, some pathways to progress were highlighted.

The theme title was “Adapting to emerging challenges: promotion of effective arrangements for the management of fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region”.

The once-in-two-years RCFM serves as a forum for analysis, synthesis and agreement on actions needed to reshape fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region. This second RCFM preceded the 30<sup>th</sup> session of APFIC held later at the same venue. (The first APFIC-RCFM which met in Kuala Lumpur in 2006 focused on the theme “Reforming fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region”).

Ninety two persons from 17 countries plus representatives from 15 organizations took part in the second RCFM, which was hosted by the Government of Indonesia, the FAO and APFIC.

Prof. Widi Agoes Pratikto, APFIC chairman and Secretary General, Ministry of Marine Affairs and



Fisheries (MMAF), Indonesia, welcomed participants. Mr Ichiro Namura, Assistant Director-General of Fisheries, FAO, Rome, pointed out (in a message read out in his absence) that APFIC is the world’s oldest fisheries commission. The RCFM enables discussion and action on the outcome of important workshops on select issues. Dr S H Sarundajang, Governor of North Sulawesi, said APFIC’s role as a policy platform was important in a world of changing climate and changing trade patterns.

**Session 1** reviewed the “**status and challenges in fisheries and aquaculture in the region**”. In his keynote address on “Adapting to emerging challenges”, Prof Hasjim Jalal, International Ocean Law Adviser to the Minister, MMAF, urged more effective synthesis of scientific findings, greater consistency in implementation of agreements, a shift in focus of member-countries from production to sustainable use, improved cost-effectiveness and efficiency, better monitoring and feedback on progress.

Dr Simon Funge-Smith, APFIC Secretary, summarized “Status and potential of fisheries and

aquaculture in Asia and the Pacific”. He said that in 2006, capture fisheries from the APFIC region made up 52 percent of global production. Major trends in capture fisheries: a large increase in inland fisheries in South Asia, improvement in quality of reporting from China, leveling-off of production in Japan and South Korea. Aquaculture production in the region accounted for more than 90 percent of global production, China continued to be the dominant state. In South Asia, inland water culture production had tripled in three years. He said member-countries should improve estimates of production from backyard systems. As regards the future, it looked good – significant progress in fisheries governance, improvement in aquaculture management – but many challenges still needed to be addressed.

The session heard member-countries describe actions and achievements concerning items identified by the 29<sup>th</sup> session of APFIC. These related mainly to mainstreaming co-management into fisheries management, and reducing the catch of low-value/trash fish, especially from marine coastal waters. Many countries reported good progress.

**Session 2** discussed “**Capacity management and IUU fishing in the Asia-Pacific region**”. The Phuket workshop of June 2007 on the subject was recalled. Key steps in capacity management were assessing current capacity, developing national plans of action, and introducing rights-based

measures. Excess fishing capacity should be removed and not transferred to other fisheries. On IUU fishing, steps must be taken to ensure that flagged vessels do not undermine conservation and management effort. APFIC members ought to share data and information to tackle IUU fishing.

Regional initiatives to promote fisheries management – such as those of SEAFDEC, the BOBP-IGO, COBSEA, the WWF’s Coral Triangle Programme, and the Arafura-Timor Sea Action Plan – were outlined.

**Session 3** discussed “**certification in fisheries and aquaculture**” and recalled the September 2007 workshop on the subject held in Ho Chi Minh city, Viet Nam. Mr Miao Weimin of the APFIC Secretariat said there’s no magic formula to determine whether particular products or fisheries warrant certification initiatives. Cost-benefit generalizations were not advisable. He made suggestions for a cost-benefit analysis using a simple decision tree. Mr Pham Trong Yen from Viet Nam said certification schemes should be - considered not just for South-North trade but also for South-South trade. Mr Sena De Silva of the NACA Secretariat referred to the work being done by FAO and NACA for two years on guidelines for aquaculture certification. The final draft of FAO guidelines on the subject would be presented to the fourth meeting of COFI-AQ on 6-10 October, 2008, in Puerto Varas, Chile.

**Session 4** was devoted to “**Country initiatives in combating IUU fishing and capacity management and promoting certification in fisheries and aquaculture**”.

Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam outlined national efforts and challenges. Some of the questions raised during discussion related to

mitigating the impacts of climate change; the rising costs of fuel; the use of new technologies to manage fisheries; and promotion of South-South cooperation.

The session chairperson said it could not be assumed that joining certification schemes would automatically mean more benefits for producers, but it might improve market access in some areas. He urged that schemes being developed by member-countries should be in accordance with FAO guidelines. The chairperson appreciated the ‘increased openness’ between countries on IUU fishing.

**Session 5** focused on “**Regional Policy Issues and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries**”. Ms Gabriella Bianchi of the FAO reported on a 2008 workshop held in Bangkok on assessment and management of offshore resources in South and Southeast Asia. She said that these countries had policies to promote and expand fishing farther offshore from their coasts. There was concern that the policy could backfire if not managed effectively. The workshop believed that the offshore resources were rather limited, and in the case of oceanic tuna, already heavily exploited. Several technological, social and ecological constraints made offshore fishing a high-risk undertaking. The workshop recommended a precautionary approach to offshore fishing in

South and Southeast Asia, starting with in-depth economic feasibility studies and risk assessments.

Discussing “Marine protected areas (MPAs) and fisheries management – the human dimension,”

Ms Ramya Rajagopalan of the International Collective in Support of Fish Workers (ICSF), Chennai, said MPAs ranged from ‘no-take’ to ‘multiple-use’ zones. She said ICSF had examined six case-studies (from India, Thailand, Africa and Latin America) to look at ways in which livelihood concerns were incorporated into MPAs. The case studies showed loss of livelihoods, ineffective processes, dominance of natural science and neglect of social science, ineffective implementation of legislation, and poor flow-back of economic and social benefits to communities. The speaker urged a human rights approach to MPAs. Replying to a question, she said MPAs were often designed by environmental ministries for environmental reasons without considering social objectives.

Discussing “Global drivers and their implications for Southeast Asian fisheries,” Mr Steven Hall, Director-General of the WorldFish Center, said the most obvious drivers were trade and markets. Global climate and environment were other major drivers. Many studies had been carried out about the impact on resources, but few about the impact on communities. A vulnerability map showed Africa



*The APFIC Consultative Forum Meeting in progress.*

and sub-saharan Africa to be the most vulnerable to climate change, while large impacts were also felt in Asia.

Other presentations during the session were on “Fisheries assessments – a tool for management?”, “Promoting long-term sustainable management of marine fisheries by addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing – issues and challenges for the APFIC region”, “Adapting to challenges – water development and inland fisheries,” “Aquaculture developments in the Asian region and associated issues that need attention.”

**Session 6** highlighted “**New areas of APFIC’s work**”. Dr Derek Staples, FAO-APFIC Consultant, focused on implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries through the Ecosystem Approach. The speaker said that the ecosystem approach – recommended by the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in 2002 — could be defined as “a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promoted conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way”. In a fisheries context, the ecosystem approach to fisheries emphasizes the management of all the major components in an ecosystem, including associated species, habitats and vulnerable species, and also the social and economic benefits that can be derived from harvesting fish.

Mr Richard Gregory, FAO-APFIC Consultant, made a presentation on “Reducing vulnerability and improving fisheries livelihoods of coastal communities”. He said many fishing communities were caught in a poverty trap. A declining resource base demanded more fishing and increased costs – which drove them deeper into poverty. Finding alternative livelihoods for these people was not easy, since most of them had limited access to land, capital or assets.



*Bunaken National Marine Park,  
Manado*

He said livelihood alternatives could be within a community or outside it, and either extractive or non-extractive. Aquaculture was an extractive option within the community. But it had negative impacts – it could suppress the local price of fish, and sustainability was questionable. Improving market opportunities would be useful, but this was difficult in remote areas.

Non-extractive options such as tourism might not benefit many fishers. At best, fishers could be hired to man tourist boats. Small shops needed business skills. Handicrafts and village industries were an option; access to capital and credit posed problems.

It is time to face up to some truths, Mr Gregory said. Many coastal fishers didn’t want their children to take up their occupation. Governments had a responsibility to assist fishers to diversify. The next generation would need education and skill training and discover new opportunities and options.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

The Forum felt that significant advances had been made in reforming fisheries, but there was need for more effective management. Aquaculture offered opportunities, but its performance had to improve.

The Forum said progress had been made in reducing low-value/trash fish production, reducing trawl sector capacity, improving value addition and improving fish handling and utilization. But production of low-value/trash fish continued to be significant, and this raised concerns about the growth overfishing.

The Forum emphasized that co-management approaches should be mainstreamed into fisheries management. Feedback from member-countries showed that this was happening. Co-management approaches differed across countries: the common feature was better dialogue on decision-making between fisheries agencies, fishers and fish farmers.

The forum recommended that APFIC should continue to facilitate information sharing between regional organizations on key issues relating to fisheries and aquaculture. APFIC should monitor recent changes in member-countries’ policies – specifically, developments relating to IUU fishing, managing fishing capacity, certification, co-management and low value/trash fish.

The Forum identified a dozen tasks for implementation, including the following:

- review how fisheries and aquaculture can adapt or even benefit from climate change;
- evaluate the benefits (human and environmental) of MPAs and their trade-offs;
- assess the impact of subsidies on fisheries and aquaculture in the region and the effect of their removal;
- identify positive and negative impacts of reducing fishing overcapacity;
- promote harmonization of food standards and certification systems for member-countries;
- develop regional cooperation to manage fishing capacity and combat IUU fishing;
- report on changing markets and trade in the region, in particular the effects of FTAs, economic integration and the WTO;
- review the implications of increasing fuel and feed prices on the sector; and
- plan for water development with minimal negative impact on inland fisheries.