

# Sri Lanka Holds Workshop on Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

A National Workshop on implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 9-10 December, 2005. It was organised by the BOBP-IGO in association with Sri Lanka's Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (MFAR). The National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) hosted the two-day event.

Fifty-five participants representing leading fisheries institutions of Sri Lanka — such as the MFAR, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR), NARA, National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA), National Institute of Fisheries Nautical Engineering, Ceylon Fisheries Harbor Corporation, and Central Fisheries Harbour Corporation — as well as NGOs, fisheries co-operative societies and the BOBP-IGO attended the workshop.

Mr H S G Fernando, Director, Ocean Resources, MFAR, served as facilitator for the Workshop's inaugural session. Dr Champa Amarasiri, Acting Director-General of NARA, welcomed the participants.

Dr Y S Yadava, Director of the BOBP-IGO, said in introductory remarks that the Workshop was meant to facilitate better understanding and more effective implementation of the CCRF in Sri Lanka. The Code could be adapted to suit the particular needs and circumstances of Sri Lankan fisheries. Implementing the Code has been one of the core activities of the BOBP-IGO, which is committed to taking the Code to fishers at the



*Mr E Jinadasa, Secretary, MFAR inaugurated the CCRF Workshop.*

grassroots. He said the Workshop was being held against the backdrop of two important events — the December 2004 tsunami and the tenth anniversary of the CCRF.

In his inaugural address, Mr E Jinadasa, Secretary, MFAR, said that in confronting the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami, the Government was following the motto of “build back better”.

The Workshop consisted of three technical sessions. The first heard eight invited presentations. During the second session, four groups of participants discussed select issues. Their recommendations were discussed and finalised during the third session.

## Technical Sessions

**Mr G Piyasena**, Director-General, DFAR, discussed implementation of the CCRF in Sri Lanka. Outlining the structure of the fisheries sector in Sri Lanka and the responsibilities

of different agencies, he said that know-how on the IPOA (International Plans of Action) was lacking in Sri Lanka, so were resources to implement them. The open-access nature of marine fisheries, the poor status of resource information, and lack of awareness about CCRF were other drawbacks to the implementation of CCRF.

**Dr D E M Weerakoon**, Director-General, NADQA, talked about inland fisheries and aquaculture and their sustainable development. He said that reservoirs constituted the mainstay of inland fisheries and steps were being taken to enhance stocks for culture-based fisheries. In coastal aquaculture, *Penaeus monodon* was the main species farmed in the North-West Provinces. The total area under shrimp farming was estimated at 4 500 ha by the end of 2004. The white spot syndrome virus and brooder shortage were some of the main constraints. However, steps have

been taken to screen healthy brooders and provide quality seed to farmers.

Policies in inland fisheries and aquaculture were directed at achieving a total production of 60 000 metric tons by 2009. Dredging of the Dutch Canal would increase the carrying capacity of the area, and more farms could be set up in future. NAQDA is currently implementing regulations on inland capture, culture-based fisheries, shrimp farming; and best management practices in aquaculture.

Speaking on marine fisheries, **Mr G Piyasena** said that fisheries had been hit hard by the recent tsunami: some 4 870 fishers had died, 103 000 fisherfolk were displaced, 16 500 fisher houses were destroyed and 13 300 damaged. Some 24 000 fishing boats were either destroyed or damaged while 10 out of 12 fishing harbours sustained damage.

However, the pace of relief and rehabilitation had been rapid: 93 percent of the fleet was rehabilitated by November 2005. But a fall in fish production could not be avoided. Production during January - June 2005 was nearly 40 per cent less than that in the previous two years.

Mr Piyasena said that over-exploitation, use of illegal and harmful fishing methods, damage to critical habitats and user conflicts were some of the major problems faced by the sector. Some other issues: heavy reliance on the gill net fishery, imbalances in harvesting of resources, heavy post-harvest wastage. Dearth of reliable information on stocks and harvestable potential also impeded optimum exploitation.

Some major steps had been undertaken to “build back better” after the tsunami, such as striving for better-designed multi-day boats, improving on-boat handling and preservation, promoting sustainable fisheries management, engaging and empowering resource users,

increasing export opportunities, building institutional capacities, improving safety at sea and ensuring minimum safety standards.

**Mr A Hettiarachchi**, Director-General (Development), MFAR, discussed trade in marine products. He said that fisheries accounted for 1.5 to 2.8 percent of Sri Lanka’s GNP and met nearly 75 percent of the population’s protein requirements. Shrimp, tuna, lobsters and shark fins are the main items of export. Sri Lanka’s recently acquired GSP+ status would help promote exports to European countries; but it also imposed obligations relating to good governance and sustainable development. He said Rs 500 million had been allotted in the recent budget for setting up a new fish market in Colombo. He suggested a detailed survey of people in the fish trade.

**Dr Ranjith Edirisinghe**, who head’s NARA’s post-harvest technology division, dealt with post-harvest and quality control issues. Detailing the country’s post-harvest infrastructure, he said Sri Lanka has 12 fishing harbours, 37 small landing sites and a central fish market situated in Colombo. About 79 to 87 percent of the fish is marketed fresh, 13 to 21 percent as dry. The private sector accounts for about 98 percent of marketing.



*Mr A Hettiarachchi, Director-General, MFAR (top), Dr (Ms) Champa Amarasiri, Action Director-General, NARA (middle), Dr R Edirisinghe, Head, Post-Harvest Technology Division, NARA (bottom).*

*Mr G Piyasena, Director-General, DFAR, discussed the present status of implementation of the Code in Sri Lanka.*





Sixteen EU-approved factories in the country comply with export regulations.

The tsunami has damaged post-harvest fisheries to the extent of Lankan Rs 260 million. It has also reduced production of fish (by about 28 percent) and per-capita consumption, and contaminated the quality of ice and water. The immediate and long-term needs of the marketing sector are to renovate or re-establish fish markets and auction halls, promote the use of ice boxes, modernise fishing vessels to include on-board preservation and processing, identify market opportunities for fishery products, and raise public awareness on hygienic handling of fish and on preventing wastage.

**Dr S S Tabrez Nasar** of the BOBP spoke about information networking and extension linkages. He stressed the need for better awareness and knowledge of fisheries management, sustainable exploitation and conservation; linkages among individuals and organisations; and networking. He said that facilities in print and electronic media, as well as recent developments in information technology, could be tapped to strengthen networking.

Discussing gender issues in fisheries and aquaculture, **Dr Rekha Maldeniya** of NARA said that women are active mainly in fish processing.

Most fisheries programmes supported male-oriented activities,

she said, because women in fishing communities lacked clout both collectively (they are not organised) and individually. To make matters worse, the tsunami had made widows of many fisherwomen; they were now fully responsible for maintaining their families. She urged a more gender-sensitive approach in fisheries, development of women's cooperatives, and creation of a national network for women in fisheries. Projects should target men and women together, not separately.

**Dr Champa Amarasiri** of NARA spoke about research support to CCRF implementation, which is at present provided by NARA and a network of 13 universities. With a staff strength of 325 including 40 researchers, NARA is active in nine major research areas; it also helps out with legislation on fisheries and aquaculture. It supports post-tsunami research in three areas — impact of the tsunami on fishing habitats and communities; rehabilitation monitoring; and sea-level monitoring for an early warning centre. Dr Amarasiri said that NARA offices and facilities had suffered heavy damage from the tsunami.

### **Group discussions and recommendations**

After the eight technical presentations, participants formed four groups to discuss critical issues in detail.

Group I discussed marine resources, stock assessment and production potential, crafts and gear, safety at sea, tsunami rehabilitation, FAO Plans of Action, policy and legal issues. Group II discussed inland fisheries and aquaculture resources, production potential and sustainability issues, FAO Plans of Action, policy and legal issues, etc.

Group III discussed post-harvest and value addition, marketing, eco-labelling and other trade-related matters, impact of globalisation, subsidies in fisheries, policy and legal issues. Group IV discussed extension linkages, information



*Group discussions (top) and technical presentations (bottom) highlighted the meeting.*



networking, gender in fisheries, welfare programmes, research programmes, tsunami rehabilitation, policy and legal issues, etc.

During the third technical session, the four groups presented their observations and recommendations. A few specifics:

- Fisheries societies should be set up and strengthened in major and medium-size reservoirs. Ultimate objective: A Fisheries Management Authority.
- Community-based fingerling production should be encouraged in mini nurseries. Facilities should be set up to screen broodstock.
- Reservoirs should be enhanced by stocking with tilapia species. Reservoirs where an Indian carp fishery has been established should be enhanced with the same varieties.
- Advanced technology should be provided to aquaculture development centers for preserving genetic material for spawning activities.

The BOBP-IGO has held similar workshops in other member-countries also. In India, a National Workshop on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries was held from 29-30 September 2000, in Bangladesh on 23-24 April 2002 and in Maldives during 18-19 January 2004.

- Farmer organisations should be strengthened.
- Shrimp farming should be promoted in new areas, especially in the southern and eastern coasts.
- State marketing organisations should help promote the processing and marketing of shrimps.
- Research and development of commercially important seaweed should be promoted both for aquaculture and for research and development (breeding and fattening of sea cucumber juveniles in pens for the export trade).

- Safe and wholesome fish products for consumers should be encouraged by developing awareness at the school and community levels; developing awareness among traders through the mass media on maintaining the freshness of fish; introducing a national safety and quality assurance system; and by reviewing existing rules and regulations on fish trade and quality assurance.
- Raising awareness on the need for change in the social attitude towards widows. Recognition of the role of women in fisheries.
- Development of non-formal education schemes for fisher communities, better health facilities, and alternative income generating activities.

Mr Hettiarachchi thanked the BOBP-IGO for organising the Workshop. Dr Yadava thanked the participants for their contributions, and the MFAR and NARA for the excellent Workshop arrangements.

