

# Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission endorses past work, discusses future plans at meeting in Manado, Indonesia



The Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC), held its 30<sup>th</sup> session in Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, on 11-13 August 2008. Thirty three persons – representatives from 15 member-countries, plus observers from SEAFDEC, the BOBP-IGO, the Swedish Board of Fisheries and the FAO – took part. The meeting followed the second session of the APFIC Consultative Forum (see pages 26-28) at the same venue.

The meeting reviewed the activities of APFIC since the 29<sup>th</sup> session, deliberated on a draft overview on the status and potential of fisheries and aquaculture in the region, considered the recommendations of the second APFIC Regional Consultative Forum Meeting (RCFM), discussed two expert workshops organized by APFIC, endorsed major themes for the next biennium (2009-10) and also discussed the organization's strategic plan for 2008-12.

Mr Ndiaga Gueye, Chief, International Institutions and Liaison Service, Fisheries & Aquaculture Department of FAO welcomed participants on behalf of Mr Ichiro Nomura, Assistant Director-General (Fisheries) of the FAO. Mr Freddy Numberi, Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Republic of Indonesia, referred to his country's close co-operation with FAO and APFIC. He cited the RPOA (Regional Plan of Action) initiated by Indonesia along with Australia to promote responsible fisheries practices including combating illegal, unreported and

unregulated fishing (IUU). He described it as the first regional plan of its kind in the world.

**APFIC activities since the 29<sup>th</sup> session:** The APFIC Secretary summarized the main events and activities undertaken by APFIC since its last session held in Kula Lumpur (21-23 August 2006). These included

- Two regional workshops held in 2007 in Phuket and Ho Chi Minh city.
- Collaboration with regional and international projects such as BOBP-IGO, Mekong River Commission, NACA, SEAFDEC, WorldFish Center and ICSF.
- Assistance to members, such as participation in the RPOA to promote responsible fishing practices and technical inputs for a workshop to consider the risks and benefits of introducing *Penaues vannamei* into India.
- Information dissemination through an excellent medium,

the APFIC website (<http://www.apfic.org>), and 14 publications.

## Overview: Status and Potential of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Asia and the Pacific

The meeting heard a summary of a draft of this document. Some highlights:

Asia accounted for 87 percent of the 41.4 million persons engaged in fisheries and aquaculture production. Total catch in tropical areas of the Asia-Pacific region was 23.1 million tonnes. In tropical waters, coastal stocks may be more diverse and perhaps more resilient in the face of heavy fishing pressure (in terms of biomass) than in temperate waters. Finfish requiring lower inputs (such as tilapia, carps and barbs) have been important food fish for developing states of the Asia-Pacific region. Many of these species are grown and cultured in backyard ponds – an activity often not captured in official statistics.



Dominant commercial species under culture were brackishwater shrimps, freshwater prawns and freshwater/brackish water crabs. Two major species accounted for over 60 percent of the total crustacean production in 2006 – the whiteleg shrimp *P.vannamei* and the giant tiger shrimp *P.monodon*.

Aquaculture production in the Asia-Pacific region was 46.3 million tonnes – 90 percent of the global figure – sparked mainly by continued growth in China. South Asia's aquaculture production had tripled in 15 years, from 1.4 million tonnes in 1991 to 4.2 million tonnes in 2006, and also diversified.

As for capture fisheries, the phenomenon of fishing down the food chain – of capture of smaller and less valuable species – was noticeable. Shark catches were falling in temperate waters, going up in tropical waters. Tuna catches (the largest constituent of pelagic species) had declined steadily in temperate waters of the Asia-Pacific since 1965.

The Commission recommended that APFIC member-countries provide statistics that include catch effort and vessel numbers; improve estimates of production from backyard systems; provide improved disaggregated reports of the production in aquaculture. The Commission urged a 'constructive dialogue' on Marine Protected Areas between fisheries and environmental agencies to utilize their social and environmental benefits.

### **Regional workshops on capacity management and certification**

The findings and recommendations of two APFIC regional consultative workshops on "Fishing capacity management and IUU fishing" (Phuket, Thailand, 13-15 June, 2007) and "Certification schemes for capture fisheries and aquaculture" (Ho Chi Minh city, Viet Nam, 18-30 September 2007), both funded by Sweden, were discussed.

The first workshop sought greater awareness, understanding and action on making fishing capacity commensurate with the productive capacity of the fishery resource and ensuring its sustainable utilization. The workshop adopted a document on how to address the issues of IUU fishing and capacity reduction. The meeting agreed that the Southeast Asia RPOA is a useful framework for countries and regional organizations.

The second workshop reviewed costs and opportunities associated with certification schemes for fisheries and aquaculture in the APFIC region. The workshop recognized that certification leads to many benefits but several issues must be addressed first – such as regional involvement, inclusion of small-scale fishers and farmers, harmonization of certification schemes, cost-benefit analyses, good governance and stakeholder involvement and capacity-building at national and regional levels. Some recommendations were made.

The Commission was told that many APFIC countries have approved or are drafting national plans of action on IUU fishing. The BOBP-IGO said it had initiated a programme on monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), and that national action plans for MCS were being developed together with member-countries. The secretariat urged members to send policy information to APFIC for uploading on its website.

Members outlined measures they had taken to manage fishing capacity, China has removed 26 000 vessels from its marine fishery; 80 000 fishers have left the fishery and are being trained for onshore livelihoods. India is capping its motorized artisanal fleet at 50 000 craft and limiting the number of commercial vessels. Malaysia is reducing trawler capacity. The Philippines is refining zonation of coastal areas and shifting excess capacity. Sri Lanka has completed a comprehensive census to establish

a database. Thailand has frozen the number of trawlers and push nets, brought in mesh size controls and undertaken a pilot low-cost vessel positioning system.

On certification, the Commission recommended special attention to workable certification schemes for small-scale farmers and fisherfolk and regional inputs to ensure harmonization of certification schemes. It urged that certification schemes should conform to FAO guidelines on ecolabelling of marine capture fisheries products and the forthcoming FAO guidelines on certification of aquaculture products.

The Commission endorsed the recommendations of the RCFM (see pages 26-28). It also heard accounts of regional arrangements and initiatives such as the RPOA, SEAFDEC-ASEAN, the Coral Triangle Initiative, as well as the 27<sup>th</sup> session of COFI (5-9 March 2007) held in Rome. The secretariat urged members to inform COFI about management initiatives in the Bay of Bengal, the South China Sea, the Yellow Sea and other small ecosystems; implementation of the CCRF (Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries); application of the Code to aquaculture; and measures to control IUU fishing.

India informed the meeting that the CCRF is being translated into local Indian languages with the support of the BOBP-IGO, and that this work would form the basis for a national CCRF. The BOBP-IGO pointed out that the CCRF would be 13 years old in October 2008. A review would be timely.

The meeting was told that FAO guidelines for aquaculture certification were being developed. Expert workshops for the purpose had been held in Bangkok (March 2007) and Beijing (May 2008).

APFIC will hold its 31<sup>st</sup> session in South Korea in September 2010, in conjunction with the third RCFM.