



Floating houses give livelihoods from inland fishing and cage aquaculture in Thailand

Outcomes of the Twenty-ninth Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 21-23 August 2006

Simon Funge-Smith¹

The Twenty-ninth Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) was convened in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 21-23 August 2006 and hosted by the Government of Malaysia's Department of Fisheries. The Session was attended by 44 participants including delegates from 14 member countries of APFIC, advisors, FAO staff, and observers from 9 partner international and regional fisheries organizations and arrangements: Asian Fisheries Society (AFS), Bay of Bengal Program – Intergovernmental Organization (BOBP-IGO), INFOFISH, Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), Partnership for the Environmental Management of the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Centres (SEAF-DEC), and the Worldfish Center (WFC).

The objectives of the session were to agree on actions needed to: (a) resolve the issues associated with the increasing catches of low value/trash fish in the APFIC region; and (b) "mainstream" fisheries co-management in the APFIC region. In addition, the session was asked to identify two high priority emerging issues as a focus for APFIC's work in the coming biennium 2007/08.

As part of this package of major reforms for the fishery sector, the Commission agreed to reduce trawling and push net fishing as a first step for reversing the production of low value trash fish and 'fishing down the food chain'.

The Commission strongly recommended that the issues associated with the increasing trend in the production of low value fish taken from the APFIC region should be addressed by taking action on three fronts, covering both fishery and aquaculture initiatives, these covered improved utilization, and better handling post-harvest.

Noting that aquaculture was growing at a rapid rate in the region and that feed for this growing industry continued, in large part, to be sourced (either directly or indirectly) from wild fish stocks, the Commission also made recommendations relating to improvements in feeding practices and efficiency of feed use in aquaculture.

The Commission recommended that fisheries co-management be mainstreamed in national systems of management in the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, building on previous activities. This involves including stakeholders in the planning and implementation of fisheries management, through more equal sharing of authority and responsibility for the management of fisheries, and fostering a partnership between government and local communities.

APFIC Member's recommendations for improved fishery management

- reduce trawling and push net effort and fishing capacity (and clearly monitor the effects of capacity reduction);
- introduce improved selectivity of fishing gears/fishing practices, in particular gear to increase the size of fish captured;
- introduce mechanisms for rights based fisheries and co-management (to facilitate reduction in the 'race for fish')
- establish mechanisms to identify and protect juvenile nursery areas (refugia/closed areas, seasonal closure);
- provide alternative income generating activities;
- link fisheries and aquaculture policies to other sectoral policies (particularly agriculture) and to more general development policies; and
- introduce policies which provide incentives to carry out these actions.

The Commission also endorsed a report on the current status of fisheries and aquaculture policy in the APFIC region and agreed that the policies in the region represented best practice and agreed to focus on implementing the existing policies. Looking at the future, the APFIC members agreed to intensify cooperation for two emerging issues – managing fishing capacity and fish trade and standards. These two themes will be the focus of Consultative workshops and the next regional consultative forum in 2008.

The decisions taken at the APFIC session are now being echoed in other important regional fora, as witnessed by the recent East Asian Seas Congress which highlighted fisheries issues such as IUU fishing and the degradation of fisheries resources in the region. Other regional organizations are now building these recommendations into their own workplans as member countries try and focus on these key areas which require priority attention.

APFIC's role in this respect is to bring emerging issues in the region to the attention of policy makers and through a process of consultation and consensus building - develop regional agreement on strategies and actions to address the issues as they arise. APFIC cannot do this alone and works in partnership with a broad range of organizations and projects to develop such consensus and benefits from the wide range of technical and policy inputs which the partners can provide.

APFIC member's recommendations and actions to address the issue of low value/trash fish

- improved utilization of low value fish for human consumption;
- improve post-harvest fish handling for human consumption and enhance food safety measures;
- develop new fish products through processing; and
- promote the benefits of fish for improving food security and reducing poverty in the region.

APFIC member's recommendations and actions for aquaculture feeds and feeding

- fast-track the change over from direct feeding to pellet feeding (noting that shrimp aquaculture is already based on pellet feed);
- reduce fish meal content of aquaculture feeds by substitution of suitable ingredients in pellets;
- invest in feed research for inland/marine species; and
- encourage integrated fish farming for the culture of herbivorous and omnivorous species.

SIMON FUNGE-SMITH, FAO



Japanese anchovy light fishing boats, Phu Quoc, Viet Nam. The anchovy is used to make high grade fish sauce

¹Simon Funge-Smith

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP)

E-mail: Simon.fungesmith@fao.org

APFIC member's recommendations for mainstreaming co-management

Ensure that co-management addresses key national policy objectives such as reducing overexploitation of fish stocks and over-capacity in both marine and freshwater fisheries, poverty reduction, possibly through rights-based approaches;

Review, develop and amend national fishery policy and legislation (where necessary) to support fisheries and aquaculture co-management, in particular supporting the right of stakeholders to be involved in management;

Invest adequate resources into developing co-management and allocate appropriate budgets for fisheries co-management practices at all levels, (noting that it often takes significant time to build up the trust and capacity for successful co-management.);

Define and communicate the respective roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders (including government and regional /intergovernmental organizations);

At the operational level, establish agreed objectives for fisheries co-management (through dialogue and negotiation with fishery communities and civil society organizations/NGOs);

Assist in the empowerment of communities, and ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of co-management, with special emphasis on the livelihoods of small-scale users;

Facilitate human and institutional capacity building at all appropriate levels across communities and scales, in particular, ensure that government staff at all levels are adequately skilled and experienced to facilitate the implementation of fisheries co-management (focusing on participation, communication and building partnerships);

Facilitate the creation of effective institutional arrangements and linkages among the major stakeholders at all levels, building on existing arrangements, (including better cross-sectoral integration and communication where appropriate for fisheries co-management);

The Commission also endorsed recommendation for all stakeholders to implement the following actions:

Share information and experiences on co-management between members including information on costs and benefits, via lessons learnt; and

Encourage research agencies to undertake applied research that meets high priority needs of major stakeholders in particular utilize traditional knowledge, management practices and experience (as a pre-requisite, co-management stakeholders may need to develop mechanisms to prioritize and communicate research needs).