

Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region

On the occasion of the *ASEAN-SEAFDEC Conference on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security in the New Millennium: "Fish for the People"*, the Senior Officials of ASEAN-SEAFDEC Member Countries met in Bangkok, Thailand on 24 November 2001.

Guided by the Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region, and the need to formulate regional guidelines for the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the Senior Officials adopted the following Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region to be used as a guideline to develop programs, projects and activities for the implementation of the Resolution.

A. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

1. Establish and implement comprehensive policies for innovative fisheries management, such as the decentralization of selected fisheries management functions to the local level, the progressive introduction of rights-based fisheries management through licensing and community fishing rights, the improvement of vessel registration systems and the development of supporting legal and institutional frameworks.
2. Ensure local consensus building on innovative management measures through consultative processes and create close monitoring mechanisms to support and implement these measures.
3. Take measures to prevent unauthorized fishing and eliminate the use of illegal and destructive fishing gears and practices by building awareness of their adverse impacts, the development and promotion of responsible and selective fishing gears and practices, enforcing regulations and encouraging alternative means of livelihood.
4. Optimize the use of inshore waters through resource enhancement programs such as promoting the installation of artificial reefs and structures, encouraging coordinated and effective planning for coastal fisheries management programs, undertaking environmental impact assessment studies, restocking of commercially important fish species and developing human resources for the implementation of such programs.
5. Review the issue of excess fishing capacity at the national level and recommend where appropriate, measures to improve the registration of fishing vessels, the introduction of rights-based fisheries and the reduction in the number of fishing boats and level of fishing effort using government incentives.
6. Formulate guidelines to promote the use of practical and simple indicators for multi-species fisheries as a substitute for classical fisheries management models within the national fisheries management framework, with particular regard to facilitating timely local level fisheries management decisions.
7. Investigate the potential of under-utilized fisheries resources and promote their exploitation in a precautionary manner based upon analysis of the best available scientific information under rights-based fisheries regimes.
8. Develop and maintain freshwater fisheries through inter-agency coordination of multiple-use water resources and trans-boundary inland fisheries management, promoting awareness of the importance of freshwater fisheries for local food security, rehabilitating and restoring habitats for migratory freshwater fish, restocking indigenous fish species to enhance productivity and encouraging culture-based freshwater fisheries where appropriate.
9. Coordinate and decentralize the collection and use of fisheries related statistical data between the national fisheries and other authorities including those responsible for food security, trade, vessel registration, aquaculture and rural development.
10. Maximize the use of national fisheries statistical systems by focusing on clear objectives and timely results directly related to fishery management decision-making and planning processes.

11. Apply, where appropriate, regionally standardized definitions and classifications for statistical data to facilitate regional compilation, analysis and data exchange.
12. Develop national statistical mechanisms on inland fisheries and aquaculture in order to provide a basis for their development and the exchange of statistical data and related information, with particular emphasis on the catchment approach in international river basins.

B. AQUACULTURE

1. Ensure that national policies and regulatory frameworks on aquaculture development are directed toward sustainability and avoidance of conflicts by incorporating consultations with stakeholder groups, implementing aquaculture zoning, considering social and environmental impact, and also regulating rights of access to, and use of, open water sites for mariculture.
2. Ensure production of high quality seeds on a consistent and sustainable basis by providing government support for public and private hatchery development and research, developing domesticated broodstocks and fish reproductive technologies, and promoting responsible collection and use of wild broodstock and seed.
3. Promote good farm management practices that reduce effluent pollution load and comply with relevant effluent standards through appropriate treatment.
4. Reduce the risks of negative environmental impacts, loss of biodiversity, and disease transfer by regulating the introduction and transfer of aquatic organisms in accordance with the Regional Guidelines on the Responsible Movement of Live Aquatic Animals and Plants.
5. Improve the efficient use of aquatic feeds by regulating the quality of manufactured feed and feed ingredients, providing guidelines on farm-level food conversion ratios and levels of aquaculture effluents, and supporting research into developing suitable alternative protein sources to reduce dependence on fish meal and other fish based products.
6. Improve capabilities in the diagnosis and control of fish diseases within the region by developing technology and techniques for disease identification, reliable field-side diagnostics and harmonized diagnostic procedures, and establishing regional and inter-regional referral systems, including designation of reference laboratories and timely access to disease control experts within the region.
7. Formulate guidelines for the use of chemicals in aquaculture, establish quality standards and take measures to reduce or eliminate the use of harmful chemicals.
8. Build human resource capabilities for environment-friendly, healthy, wholesome and sustainable aquaculture through closer public and private sector collaboration in research and development, paying particular attention to the emerging need for skills in biotechnology, and effectively implementing aquaculture education and extension services.
9. Promote aquaculture as an integrated rural development activity within multiple-use of land and water resources available through inter-agency coordination in policy formulation, project planning and implementation, stakeholder consultation, extension services and technology transfer.

C. SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

1. Introduce and provide support for the development of technologies to optimize the utilization of catch and reduce post-harvest losses, wastes and discards in industrial and small-scale fisheries and processing operations through improved processing facilities, on-board and on-shore handling, storage and distribution of fish and fishery products.
2. Promote the production and preserve the diversity of traditional fish products by assisting producers to secure stable supplies of quality raw materials, to meet food safety requirements and to improve product identity, nutritive value and marketing.
3. Encourage relevant control agencies to coordinate their activities at all levels in applying appropriate legislation regarding the quality and safety of fish and fishery products.

4. Develop and apply fish quality and safety management systems that ensure food safety and support the competitive position of ASEAN fish products on world markets through the implementation, validation and verification of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) based systems and improved laboratory practices, and adapting quality and safety management systems so that they may be applied to small and medium enterprises in the ASEAN region.
5. Promote and conduct training programs to upgrade the technical skills and competencies of personnel in the public sector and the fish processing industry in the ASEAN region.

D. FISH TRADE

1. Strengthen ASEAN trade policy on fish and fishery products through regional collaboration by harmonizing product standards and sanitary measures with international standards wherever appropriate, working towards harmonized guidelines for fish inspection and quality control systems among ASEAN Member Countries, strengthening fish inspection and quality control systems with regard to food safety and exchanging information on risk analysis.
2. In collaboration with international technical organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), assess the impact of government subsidies on fisheries, particularly on the needs of small-scale fisheries in the ASEAN region and sustainable fisheries.
3. Anticipate and address the potential impacts of eco-labelling of ASEAN fish and fishery products.

E. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY FORMULATION

1. Enhance regional collaboration by developing guidelines, criteria and standards on important fisheries issues to strengthen ASEAN policies and positions and harmonize them with international initiatives and arrangements.
2. Increase participation and involvement of ASEAN Member Countries in international fora and technical committees such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Codex, FAO, Office International des Epizooties (OIE), Regional Fisheries Bodies, and WTO to safeguard and promote ASEAN interests, recognizing that international fisheries policies are increasingly discussed and agreed upon at the global level.