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ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

Thirty-sixth Session

[Virtual] Thailand, 5-7 May 2021

Report of the Seventy-seventh Executive Committee Meeting

1. The Executive Committee of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) convened its Seventy-seventh Session in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 5 to 7 March 2019, hosted by the Kingdom of Thailand.
2. The full report of the meeting is presented as information paper APFIC/21/INF4.
3. The Executive Committee:
 - a) Reviewed the inter-sessional activities under the biennial APFIC work plan
 - b) Provided input to the organization of the 36th Session and 8th RCFM.
 - c) Advised the Secretariat on how it might continue to facilitate APFIC to implement its work plan.
 - d) Made recommendations to the APFIC Strategic plan, the biennial work plan and on administrative and budgetary matters.
 - e) Agreed that the Seventy-eight Session of the Executive Committee would be convened in China in 2020, pending confirmation by the Government of China.
4. Specific recommendations arising from the Seventy-sixth meeting of the APFIC Executive Committee are summarized below.

IMPROVING MONITORING OF TRENDS AND ISSUES

Providing statistical data that is less than 2 years old

5. The Executive Committee noted that the data used is several years old at the time of publication and may not accurately reflect the current situation in the region. It recommended that the Secretariat investigate the feasibility of providing some of the overview information electronically as this may allow more recent information to be provided and avoid the two-year lag.

6. The Secretariat has investigated this option. APFIC Secretariat is unable to set up a duplicate statistical reporting system to that of FAO. Member countries report statistics to FAO up to 2 years in arrears, and this would be a similar situation for APFIC.

Improvements to the regional overview

7. The Executive Committee noted that the fishery and aquaculture overview includes chapters on current issues and recommended that this be expanded to include emerging issues for the region.

8. For the 36th Session, two information papers have been prepared covering on important issues that covers existing challenges and the needs for future progress in fisheries and aquaculture. The APFIC review of aquaculture innovation during 2021 will also cover some aspects of emerging opportunities for improved aquaculture production.

Market demand and commodity forecasts

9. The Executive Committee noted that information on market demands and fishery commodity forecasts are not covered in the overview and recommended that the Secretariat investigate available options.

10. The Secretariat has explored the possibility of incorporating information from fishery trade networks such as GlobeFish and InfoFish. The Secretariat's conclusion is that re-reporting trade information would be a duplication of the function of these two bodies. Furthermore, some of the information requires subscriptions for access, which is unavailable to the APFIC Secretariat.

Exploring the reasons behind the increase in “nei” reports

11. The Executive Committee reiterated the APFIC position that fisheries monitoring data should be collected and provided to FAO at the highest possible resolution.

12. The APFIC member countries in the Asia Pacific region represents:

- 75-83% of global “nei” reporting in freshwater capture fisheries (freshwater fish nei, freshwater mollusc nei, freshwater crustaceans nei, aquatic invertebrates nei). The trend is quite stable over 30 years and the 2017 figure is 82%.
- 96-99% of global “nei” reporting of the same groups in aquaculture. The trend is stable over 30 years and the 2017 figure is 99%.
- 86-91% of global “nei” reporting in marine capture fisheries (marine fish nei, marine mollusc nei, marine crustaceans nei). The trend is stable over 30 years and the 2017 figure is 89%.
- 99% of “nei” reporting of the same groups in aquaculture. The 2017 figure is 99%.

13. In all cases, the proportion of “nei” has been relatively stable over the past 30 years

CCRF questionnaire

14. The Executive Committee recommended that an analysis of the CCRF responses be reported to the 36th Session of the APFIC Commission. This analysis is available as APFIC/21/INF9.

15. The Executive Committee recommended convening workshop training on reporting SDG 14b. This workshop is scheduled 6-8 July 2021.

MATTERS RELATED TO FISHERY AND AQUACULTURE MANAGEMENT

Participation in FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and the development of international guidelines

16. The Executive Committee considers it a priority that representatives from APFIC actively participate in the development of the FAO guidelines and provide leadership during discussions in the FAO technical bodies. APFIC is able to develop and adopt guidelines within its competence and can also provide comments on global guidelines development. However, the adoption of FAO guidelines and decisions of the Committee on Fisheries requires the active participation of the APFIC member countries.

Combatting IUU fishing in the APFIC region.

17. The Executive Committee supported the FAO regional TCP project to update the regional review of IUU fishing and encouraged all members to participate in this project. It recommended that the outcomes of this project be reported to the 36th Session of the APFIC Commission.

18. The Executive Committee further recommended that the Secretary provide a preliminary review of the national and international arrangements for combating and eliminating IUU fishing for each APFIC member for presentation at the 36th Session of the APFIC Commission.

19. The Secretariat has commissioned an updated study on assessing notable hotspots of IUU fishing in the APFIC region. The results of this study were made available as part of the APFIC Technical Webinar series. A summary is available in APFC/21/Inf 8.

Fisheries management and promotion of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management

20. The Executive Committee noted that promoting regional platforms to share EAF knowledge and experiences should continue to be a priority and promoted by APFIC. It further recommended a technical workshop to review and share the knowledge gained about EAF from the implementation of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) project. This could be considered an activity supported by the proposed Global Environment Facility (GEF) BOBLME project currently in development.

21. The Executive Committee welcomed the progress report on the project: "Fisheries co-management towards development impacts in Asia—a summary of existing knowledge and case studies: Bangladesh, Philippines, Cambodia, Sri Lanka". The summary results of this report are made available as part of the APFIC Technical Webinar series..

22. The Executive Committee requested information regarding plans for continuation of the activities under the EAF-Nansen programme. This programme has conducted activities in Myanmar, Thailand, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The programme is foreseen to continue activities in 2022.

23. One possible activity might be to collate the findings for these countries into a Bay of Bengal overview.

FAO regional initiative for blue growth in the Asia-Pacific region

24. The Executive Committee welcomed the expanded approach to Blue Growth that encompasses marine and freshwater domains and the capture and culture sub-sectors. It recommended that APFIC pursue opportunities for knowledge sharing.

25. The Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to explore opportunities for the provision of opportunities for training in national and regional analyses of market demand particularly as it applies to aquaculture.

26. FAO is currently updating its Blue Growth vision and programme and APFIC Secretariat is part of this process. Knowledge sharing of best practice and successful examples of Blue Growth are foreseen.

Anti-microbial resistance (AMR)

27. The Executive Committee noted progress on this issue and the seriousness of the threat of AMR to human and animal health and welcomed opportunities for APFIC to collaborate and work closely with initiatives on this topic. FAO has developed a regional project “Support mitigation of antimicrobial resistance associated with aquaculture in Asia (TCP/RAS/3702).

28. Awareness raising and webinars on the subject have also been convened.

MATTERS PERTAINING TO THE FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMISSION

Information and communication

29. The Executive Committee requested updating of the APFIC website to ensure that all links are working. The APFIC website has been updated and is being maintained, with an ongoing review and correction of broken links.

APFIC workplan for 2019-2020

30. The Executive Committee endorsed the APFIC Workplan for 2019-2020 as proposed by the Secretariat.

31. The Executive Committee noted that progress was on track and endorsed the APFIC work plan for 2019 as proposed by the Secretariat.

APFIC budget and administrative matters

32. The Executive Committee was informed of changes to FAO internal planning processes and that earmarked funds were no longer allocated to the FAO Regional Commissions at the start of the biennia. This policy also extends to limitation of financial support to participation in APFC technical meetings and workshops.

33. Some possible means to streamline planning and seek financial resourcing of APFIC-related work and activities were as follows:

- Attempt to re-phase the APFIC biennial work plan to coincide with the biennial FAO Regular Programme financial planning. This has the advantage of harmonizing biennial workplans, and that the APFIC session would coincide with a non-COFI year.
- Explore opportunities for the development of a trust account, or project for APFIC to enable co-financing of APFIC forums. Resources could be used to support participation in APFIC meetings and technical workshops.
- Explore the administrative arrangements required to enable APFIC to act as a coordinating or executing body for regional initiatives and programmes.

34. The Executive Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a Working Paper on these requests describing the options, administrative mechanisms and changes that would need to be made to APFIC to meet both requests. The preliminary response of the Secretariat is presented in the working paper APFIC/21/07.

Other matters

35. The Executive Committee requested that the Secretariat undertake an analysis of recent participation in APFIC by its members and to approach irregularly participating members to encourage their future participation.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

36. The Commission is invited to review the report of the Seventy-seventh meeting of the APFIC Executive Committee for endorsement and to consider the specific recommendations therein.