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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Thirty-fifth Session

Thimphu, Bhutan, 17-20 February 2020

Report of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission

Executive summary

The Thirty-fifth session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) was held from 11 to 13 May 2018 in Cebu, the Philippines. It was attended by 14 APFIC member countries, two non-APFIC FAO Members and ten partner organizations. APFIC reviewed its intersessional programme activities and endorsed the report of the Seventy-sixth meeting of its Executive Committee. APFIC endorsed the recommendations of the Seventh APFIC Regional Consultative Forum Meeting (RCFM) in full and recommended that these should inform the future biennial work plan of APFIC.

APFIC endorsed the recommendations of its “Regional Consultation to Promote Responsible Production and Use of Feed and Feed Ingredients for Sustainable Growth of Aquaculture in Asia-Pacific”, which was convened from 7 to 9 March 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand, and the recommended strategies emerging from its “Regional Consultation on Building Climate Resilient Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific Region”, which was held from 14 to 16 November 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand. APFIC welcomed FAO’s expanded “Regional Initiative on Blue Growth in Asia-Pacific” and endorsed the proposed programmatic framework and implementation plan for 2018–2019. Several Members that were not included as the initiative’s focus countries expressed interest to participate in the implementation of the initiative between 2018 and 2019. APFIC confirmed that illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing remains a major threat to sustainable fisheries and welcomed the continued efforts of FAO and other international and regional organizations to support the Members in combating IUU fishing in both inland and marine fisheries. APFIC recognized the contributions of official development assistance of regional and country Global Environment Facility projects which have relevance to fishery management and capacity in the region. Many member countries expressed interest in becoming more involved in these and future initiatives.

APFIC welcomed its proposed 2018–2023 strategic plan and endorsed the 2018–2019 biennial work plan with a number of amendments. APFIC agreed that its Thirty-sixth session would be convened in Thailand in 2020.

The outcomes of the deliberations are summarized in this information note.

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Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The Conference is invited to take note of the main outcomes of APFIC and advise FAO on key steps to be taken in the countries of the region. Key outcomes are reflected in the recommendations of APFIC for FAO to:

- continue to provide an overview of aquaculture and fisheries in Asia and the Pacific region;
- promote responsible production and the use of feed and feed ingredients for sustainable growth of aquaculture in the region;
- support building climate-resilient fisheries and aquaculture in Asia and the Pacific region;
- support implementation of FAO's regional blue-growth initiative in aquaculture and fisheries;
- support the implementation of the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in member countries;
- support resource mobilization for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the region; and
- contribute to the successful completion of the endorsed APFIC biennium work plan.

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Introduction

1. The Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) was established in 1948 under the APFIC agreement as the Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council. It is an Article XIV FAO Regional Fishery Body established by FAO at the request of its Members. The Secretariat is provided and supported by FAO. The change of the name “Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council” to “Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission” was made at the twenty-fourth session of APFIC (Bangkok, Thailand, 23 November–4 December 1993), along with amendments to the functions and responsibilities of APFIC, giving more emphasis to sustainable development and management. Currently Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States of America and Viet Nam are member countries.

2. The Thirty-fifth session of APFIC was held from 11 to 13 May 2018 in Cebu, the Philippines. It was attended by 14 APFIC member countries, two non-APFIC FAO Members and ten partner organizations.

Objective and organization

3. The purpose of APFIC is to promote the full and proper utilization of living aquatic resources by the development and management of fishing and culture operations and by the development of related processing and marketing activities in conformity with the objectives of its Members, and to these ends it has the following functions and responsibilities:

- a. keep under review the state of these resources and of the industries based on them;
- b. formulate and recommend measures and initiate and carry out programmes or projects to:
 - increase the efficiency and sustainable productivity of fisheries and aquaculture;
 - conserve and manage resources; and
 - protect resources from pollution;
- c. keep under review the economic and social aspects of fishing and aquaculture industries and recommend measures aimed at improving the living and working conditions of fisherfolk and other workers in these industries and otherwise at improving the contribution of each fishery to social and economic goals;
- d. promote programmes for mariculture and coastal fisheries enhancement;
- e. encourage, recommend, coordinate and, as appropriate, undertake training and extension activities in all aspects of fisheries;
- f. encourage, recommend, coordinate and undertake, as appropriate, research and development activities in all aspects of fisheries;
- g. assemble, publish or otherwise disseminate information regarding the living aquatic resources and fisheries based on these resources; and
- h. carry out such other activities as may be necessary for APFIC to achieve its purpose as defined above.

Discussion

4. In relation to the agenda item “Overview of aquaculture and fisheries in Asia and the Pacific

2016”, the APFIC:

- a. welcomed the overview as an important update on trends in production for Asia and the Pacific region and noted the reports by the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC) on the state of fisheries and aquaculture in Southeast Asia published every five years;
- b. noted the increasing prevalence of “not elsewhere included” in the fisheries and aquaculture statistical data, and the need for member countries to improve the underlying data collection for reporting at more disaggregated levels (e.g. species); and
- c. suggested the overview could be improved by shorter lag times between the publication of updated FAO statistics and the publication of the biannual overview reports, the inclusion of additional information databases available within the FAO system, and improved employment information.

5. With regard to “Regional consultation to Promote Responsible Production and Use of Feed and Feed Ingredients for Sustainable Growth of Aquaculture in Asia-Pacific”, the APFIC:

- a. welcomed the efforts of the Secretariat on this issue of growing importance;
- b. noted increased global awareness on the potential environmental impacts of feed ingredients and inappropriate feed use; the need to support small-scale feed producers’ uptake of alternative feed; and the need to support small-scale farmers’ implementation of efficient feeding regimes;
- c. noted the importance of responsible use of antibiotics and other aqua-medicinal products to human and environmental health and sustainability of the aquaculture sector; and
- d. endorsed the strategies identified from the regional consultation with emphasis on the use of locally available feed ingredients and alternative ingredients; Members welcomed continued support from APFIC in this work area.

6. In relation to the agenda item “Regional consultation on Building Climate Resilient Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific Region”, the APFIC:

- a. commended the efforts of the Secretariat and emphasized the need to make the sector less vulnerable to the impacts of climate change through a broad range of efforts including continued capacity-development on safety at sea and elimination of underlying stressors, such as overcapacity and overexploitation of resources; and
- b. endorsed the strategies recommended by the regional consultation.

7. In relation to the agenda item “Implementation of FAO’s Regional Blue Growth Initiative in Aquaculture and Fisheries in the Asia-Pacific Region”, the APFIC:

- a. complimented FAO for the wide range of activities implemented through the regional blue-growth initiative (RBGI) and the significant achievements made in supporting the member countries;
- b. noted that several Members wanted to be included in the activities under the expanded scope and continued recognition accorded to blue growth as a priority for the region, although they were not included in the earlier implementation;
- c. emphasized the importance of sharing success in the initiative’s implementation;
- d. welcomed the value-chain approach and efforts to document the countries’ efforts and progress in implementing the RBGI;
- e. welcomed FAO’s efforts on raising awareness among high-level officers of member countries concerning RBGI potential and noted the difficulties in advocating for the sector in cross-sectoral decision-making processes;

- f. encouraged the fisheries sector to actively take part in or lead cross-sectoral planning and development processes and actions – such as the development of marine spatial planning (i.e. integrated freshwater management planning) and other cross-sectoral planning approaches – to emphasize the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the context of multiple users of aquatic systems and improved knowledge on potential impacts and trade-offs for users of aquatic ecosystems;
 - g. noted that several Members informed APFIC on major country events and initiatives in promoting blue growth;
 - h. recognized improvements in fisheries and aquaculture governance as one of the priority work areas for 2018 and 2019. APFIC further noted the importance of capacity-development in governance to be supported by the Secretariat and regional partners; and
 - i. endorsed the new programmatic framework of the initiative and the priority work areas.
8. In relation to the agenda item “Support for the implementation of the IPOA-IUU [International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing] in member countries”, the APFIC:
- a. confirmed the necessity of strengthened efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and welcomed the efforts of FAO and the Secretariat;
 - b. noted the information shared by SEAFDEC about its subregional fisheries management initiative in the region that encourages neighbouring countries to formulate coordinated fisheries management plans that include efforts to combat IUU fishing and strengthen cooperation among its member countries. Further, APFIC was informed about ongoing SEAFDEC initiatives, such as the development of a traceability system (i.e. the electronic Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ [ASEAN] Catch Documentation Scheme for Marine Capture Fisheries [eACDS]) and the promotion of capacity-development on the implementation of port state measures in coordination with FAO and other regional partners;
 - c. noted the efforts of the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-governmental Organisation in supporting its member countries to develop national plans of action to combat IUU fishing and the initiative to organize the Second Regional Consultation on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS);
 - d. recognized the extensive work being done by its member countries in reviewing their national plans of action on IUU fishing and the support for these efforts by partner organizations. APFIC noted the extensive work of its member countries in combating IUU fishing through legislative reforms, strengthening MCS and traceability systems, strengthening partnerships and sharing best practices, among others, to support the implementation of the IPOA regarding IUU fishing. APFIC also welcomed the initiatives of member countries to become parties to the related international and regional agreements (e.g. the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and the Port State Measures Agreement);
 - e. welcomed the regional support project and indicated the need for enhanced capacity-development programmes on MCS and a system for information-sharing or data exchange on IUU fishing in the region; and
 - f. emphasized the need to include inland fisheries in efforts to combat IUU fishing.
9. In relation to the agenda item “Resource mobilization to support sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the APFIC region”, the APFIC:
- a. recognized the contributions of the regional and national Global Environment Facility projects, and noted that the outputs of these projects have relevance to fishery management and capacity in the region;

- b. welcomed reports of Members on their experiences and challenges in securing finance for the sector and welcomed the support of the Secretariat and regional partners in these efforts;
- c. noted that there is potential for further engagement through non-traditional financing mechanisms, that official development assistance is increasingly supporting efforts in public-private partnerships and through civil society organizations, and that this requires changes in approaches to resource mobilization;
- d. requested efforts to develop regional projects that could build on country and regional projects and programmes; and
- e. welcomed expressions of interest to cooperate and coordinate from regional organizations and partners.

10. In relation to the “2018-2023 APFIC strategic plan and 2018-2019 work plan and budget”, the APFIC:

- a. welcomed the draft strategic programme and provided comments on the draft strategy, including areas for consolidation of proposed areas of work, making explicit the links to the Sustainable Development Goals within the proposed work areas and highlighting shared and cross-learning and other areas to consider (e.g. interactions between fisheries and aquaculture, advancing capacity-development on the ecosystem approach to aquaculture, and incorporating social sciences to support decision-making);
- b. confirmed the following thematic areas for regional meetings proposed for the work of APFIC from 2018 to 2019 (the seventy-seventh APFIC Executive Committee meeting will provide additional guidance for appropriate themes and for the development of a detailed agenda): (1) combating IUU fishing in Asia, (2) information and communication technologies for small-scale fisheries in Asia, (3) anti-microbial resistance as it relates to aquaculture in Asia, (4) fisheries co-management experiences in Asia, and (5) gender in fisheries and aquaculture in Asia;
- c. stressed the need for improved communication of the Secretariat’s activities and outputs through the APFIC Web site; and
- d. endorsed the biennium work plan.

Conclusion

11. The Thirty-fifth session of APFIC elected Thailand as the Chair country for the biennium from May 2018 up to the Thirty-sixth APFIC session in 2020; China was elected as Vice-Chair country; and Nepal and the United States of America to serve as members of the Executive Committee together with the Chair country, the Vice-Chair country and outgoing Chair country, the Philippines. Thailand informed APFIC that its Thirty-sixth session would be held in Thailand in early 2020.