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Main features, obligations and benefits under the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission Agreement

OVERVIEW

The Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC or the Commission), originally called the “Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council”, is the Regional Fisheries Advisory Body (RFAB) in the region covering Asia and the Pacific (the “Asia-Pacific Area”), one of about 50 Regional Fisheries Bodies established globally to advise on conservation and management measures and adopt recommendations that are non-legally binding on their members.

The Agreement for the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (the Agreement) was developed to strengthen cooperation on the development and proper utilization of living aquatic resources to achieve sustainable fisheries in the region. The Agreement was approved by the FAO Conference at its Fourth session in 1948 and entered into force on 9 November 1948. The Agreement was amended in 1961, 1967, 1976, 1993, and 1996. Over the years, its scope has broadened to give more emphasis to sustainable fisheries development and management, in line with the evolving international agenda on the environment and sustainable development. There are currently 21 Members of the Commission.

The effective operationalization of APFIC relies on regular financial support from its Members to support the Commission in performing its core functions and being fully operational.

OBJECTIVES

The Agreement's main objective is to ensure the development and proper utilization of the living aquatic resources in both marine and inland waters of the Asia-Pacific Area, corresponding to the largest producer area of fisheries and aquaculture globally.

MAIN ELEMENTS

The Agreement's 16 Articles set out the rights and obligations of each Party including ensuring their representation at sessions of the Commission, and the exercise of the right to vote in deliberations thereof (Article II). The Agreement does not impose obligations upon its Parties to give effect to the recommendations adopted by the Commission.

Each Party can contribute to the realization of the Commission's functions and responsibilities (Article IV), which include:

- keeping under review the state of living aquatic resources, the industries based on them, the economic and social aspects of fishing and aquaculture industries;
- recommending measures, and carrying out programmes or projects to increase the efficiency and sustainable productivity of fisheries and aquaculture, conserve and manage resources, and protect resources from pollution;
- recommending measures for improving the living and working conditions of fishers and workers in fisheries and aquaculture;
- promoting programmes for mariculture and coastal fisheries enhancement;
- assembling and disseminating information on living aquatic resources and fisheries based on these resources.



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POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR PARTIES

On becoming a Party to the Agreement and implementing its provisions effectively, a State stands to gain numerous benefits, including:

A. PARTICIPATING IN THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF AQUATIC LIVING RESOURCES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC AREA

Parties participate in improving the conservation and management of living aquatic resources, dependent and associated species, ecosystems and biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific Area, by implementing the recommendations of the Commission and ensuring that the national sectors using or interacting with those resources comply with the applicable international and regional standards.

B. PROMOTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC AREA

Parties can ensure that the fisheries and aquaculture sectors are developed and strengthened in a sustainable manner, in line with relevant international and regional instruments and guidance. By sharing of information and good practices in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development promoted by the APFIC, the Parties to the Agreement can ensure that the sectors strive and effectively contribute to food security and nutrition in the region, while ensuring genetic diversity is conserved and adverse impacts on the environment and local communities are minimized.

C. ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Parties can demonstrate commitment to follow recommendations on conservation and management of fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific Area. Parties can attract the interest of market States that buy resources and products from fisheries and aquaculture legally and sustainably, owing to their commitment to combat overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Consequently, Parties and their associated industries activities can benefit from increased income generated in more favorable market States through fishing in the Asia-Pacific Area. In addition, income for fishing and aquaculture activities and fishing related activities carried out in such Area can be also generated as the APFIC promotes dialogue with business entities.

D. ATTRACTING FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN THE FISHERIES AND MARITIME SECTORS

Reputation of Parties that are seen as law-abiding, transparent, reliable and cooperative actors can attract foreign investment in their fisheries, aquaculture, and maritime sectors.

E. IMPROVED GOVERNANCE OF THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTORS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC AREA

Ensuring the implementation of recommendations on conservation and management adopted by the Commission can significantly enhance fisheries and aquaculture governance in the Asia-Pacific Area, through improved coordination in monitoring, control, and surveillance of fishing vessels operations, and consequently boosting transparency in decision-making for the adoption of such measures.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the Agreement, model instruments for adherence to the Agreement and treaty processes in FAO, please contact: treaties@fao.org



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