



1. WHAT is Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA)?

The Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Information System (ASFIS) is an international cooperative information system for the collection and dissemination of information covering the science, technology and management of marine, brackishwater, and freshwater environments. (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/asfa/en> / ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/asfa/faq/faq4_e.pdf)

ASFA (the Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts Bibliographic Database) is the principal information product or **module** of the ASFIS system, therefore the two terms ASFIS and ASFA are often used interchangeably, because **ASFA** is the sole remaining information module of the ASFIS system. **The ASFA database contains approximately 2 million bibliographic references** (or records) to the world's aquatic science literature, accessioned since 1971 (for some journals and/or subject areas the coverage precedes 1971). All references are machine-readable. (ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/asfa/faq/faq10_e.pdf).

ASFA is produced as a cooperative effort by the international network of ASFA Partners which consists of: United Nations Co-sponsoring Partners, National and International Partners, and the Publishing Partner (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/asfa/partners/en>). The objective is to disseminate bibliographic information to the world community.

The ASFA Partnership Agreement (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/asfa/Agreement/an690e/an690e00.pdf>) is **signed by ALL the ASFA Partners** and they are represented on the ASFA Advisory Board as described in Article VIII of the Partnership Agreement. The Board meets annually (see archive of annual Meeting Reports <http://www.fao.org/fishery/asfa/advisory-reports/en>). FAO provides the Secretariat for the ASFA Partnership as described in Article IX of the Partnership Agreement.

Input to the ASFA Database (i.e. the bibliographic references) is prepared by the international network of ASFA Partners, who are together responsible for the monitoring of more than 5000 serial publications (ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/asfa/Monitoring_List ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/asfa/faq/faq5_e.pdf) as well as books, reports, conference proceedings, and grey literature.

The collective input of the Partners is sent to the Publisher of ASFA (ProQuest) where it is processed by computer and merged to create a master file (which we call the ASFA Bibliographic Database). **From this master file, the ASFA Information Products are produced.** (ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/asfa/faq/faq8_e.pdf). They are made available to the ASFA Partners on a monthly/quarterly basis through various media and formats (e.g. **INTERNET, CD ROM/DVD**). ASFA Partners are authorized to use these products as a source of data in local, national and regional information services. The ASFA products are available commercially to the public from ProQuest (<http://www.proquest.com/>) under a paid subscription.

The Bibliographic Reference describing each document in the ASFA database contains: a detailed bibliographic citation, an abstract(s), and a set of indexing terms. (ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/asfa/faq/faq11_e.pdf) During the preparation of the bibliographic reference, it is the **responsibility** of the ASFA Partners: to identify the data elements making up the bibliographic citation, to write/edit the abstract, and to assign the indexing terms. To assist the ASFA Partners in the preparation of input (that is to ensure the consistency necessary for the computer processing and the uniformity within the resulting ASFA information products) standardized cataloguing, abstracting and indexing procedures have been prepared and published under the title of the *ASFIS Reference Series*. (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/asfa/documents/en>)

ASFA is considered by many as one of the primary sources of information in the field of aquatic sciences.