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REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR FISHERIES (RECOFI)

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**REGIONAL AQUACULTURE INFORMATION SYSTEM (RAIS):
CONSOLIDATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

This document summarizes the different steps which have lead to the establishment of the RECOFI Regional Aquaculture Information System (RAIS) including actions that should be undertaken by Member countries to consolidate the system to enhance regional aquaculture information sharing and dissemination.

The establishment of RAIS has been requested by the RECOFI Members countries in response to the rapid development of the aquaculture sector in the region. During the Third session of the Commission (Doha, Qatar, 9–11 May 2005) Kuwait offered to host the RAIS in the premises of the Public Authority of Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAFR) and allocated the funds to develop the regional information system. The Commission further requested the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department to develop the system.

The RAIS has been designed applying the most up-to-date information technology and database management in accordance to international Information Technology (IT) standards, i.e. the Open Source Content Management System Typo3. The system is user-friendly as allows rapid data entry from the administrators and easy retrieval from end users.

During the finalization process of the Web site development the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) Focal Points (FPs) were requested to submit preliminary information and data for inclusion in the RAIS. Following this the Secretariat organized a Technical Meeting on the RAIS which was held in Kuwait City, Kuwait, from 6 to 9 November 2007. The main objectives of the meeting were to (i) inform the WGA Focal Points and the RAIS Regional Centre staff on the progress made in the development of the system; (ii) train the FPs and/or the nominated RAIS National Coordinators on how to use the system and perform data entry; and (iii) receive feedback on the RAIS Web site layout and functionalities.

At the same meeting the Secretariat installed the information system on the server of the Regional Centre in PAAFR and trained the RAIS Regional Centre staff on Typo3 and on the maintenance and updating of the RAIS Web pages and databases.

During the Fourth meeting of the WGA (Muscat, Oman 27–28 January 2009) a full day was dedicated to the RAIS. The Secretariat presented the draft RAIS user manual for use by the National Coordinators and authorized users to upload and retrieve data and information into/from the information system. Furthermore, a document entitled "RAIS Communication Strategy" was also

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presented to suggest the FPs on how to promote RAIS at national and regional level and how to implement and ensure an effective RAIS data and information flow.

Additional training was requested by and provided to the RAIS Regional Centre staff in Kuwait. The Secretariat organized a training session (Kuwait, 15–16 February 2009) to enable the Regional Centre staff to operate independently in the daily maintenance of RAIS. The main objectives of this meeting were to (i) provide a general overview on how the system has been developed by presenting its structure and system administration functions; (ii) strength the capacities of the Regional Centre staff in performing its duties; (iii) define the next actions to be taken to ensure the official launching of RAIS and present a regional communication strategy for the promotion of the information system at the national, regional and international level.

The RAIS was officially launched on the internet the 2nd of March 2009. From this date onward several actions have been taken to better promote and disseminate the RAIS Web site and its contents. Press releases (in Arabic and English) have been produced and distributed to national, regional and international specialised journals and electronic bulletins. The exchange of links and information with national and regional aquaculture-related Web sites has been continuously implemented. Furthermore, actions have been taken to ensure the positioning of the RAIS in the search results of the main internet search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo). RAIS News & Events section, the most visible one, has been continuously fed after the official launching to stimulate the interest of new users.

The Secretariat (FAO-FIMA) will provide adequate technical assistance and backstopping to the RAIS Regional Centre for at least one year in order to ensure that the system is fully functional.

Programme of work (RAIS)

The next RECOFI intersessional period should be devoted to the consolidation of the information system and its promotion at national and regional level for the benefit of regional aquaculture stakeholders. The RAIS activities for the next intersessional period include:

- Expansion of the number of RAIS authorized users having the editing right to enter data into the system. This should increase the information flow in the Web site and reducing the responsibilities and workload of the RAIS National Coordinators and the RECOFI-WGA FPs.
- RAIS National Coordinators and FPs should continue to timely report any problem or system inconsistency/faults to the RAIS Regional Centre and propose suggestions to further improve and strengthen the system.
- RAIS National Coordinators and FPs will continue to be responsible of the overall supervision of national data and information collected from different national sources to feed into the system.
- Each RECOFI Member country should set-up an efficient national RAIS network as well as to provide the National Coordinator/FPs with an adequate mandate and budget to cover national duties.
- The RAIS Regional Centre (Kuwait) should continue to stimulate data entry by authorized users and approach private companies wishing to advertise on the RAIS Web site. Such opportunity would generate funds to support further development of the system and provide financing to information activities of regional interest.
- Regional and national communication strategies should be adopted to promote as much as possible the newly established information system.
- The RAIS should be used as a platform to disseminate the main outputs generated by the RECOFI-WGA (e.g. technical workshops, training).

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RAIS Web analysis

A basic Web analysis of the RAIS has been carried over the first two months since its official launching to evaluate the impact of the newly established information system.

As of 22 April 2009 the total number of visits were 1 586; vists came from 100 countries and 10 231 were the pages view with an average time on the web site of 05:03 minutes (Figure 1). The general trend shown in the graph below highlights an important interest at the time of the official launching of RAIS which has been stabilized during the following months. This trend demonstrates the importance to regularly work on an effective communication strategy along with the timely updating of the information contained in the information system in order to attract and retain the maximum number of new users (visitors).

Figure 1. Summary of basic RAIS Web analysis.