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منظمة
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ASIA-PACIFIC FISHERY COMMISSION

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Inter-sessional activities and work under FAO programmes of relevance to the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission

1. Since the 36th session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) convened virtually in Bangkok, Thailand from 5 to 7 May 2021 (APFIC/23/Inf-04), there has been only one substantive activity under the endorsed APFIC work programme. There have been a range of activities conducted under the FAO Regional Office Programme, which are relevant to the recommendations of the Commission and involve the APFIC Member Nations to varying degrees.

Inter-sessional activities under the endorsed APFIC work programme

2. There has been no substantive technical work programme of the commission during the current biennium. This is primarily due to restrictions on the use of FAO Regular Programme funding to support an APFIC work programme prioritized and decided by the Commission including APFIC regional technical workshops.

3. The activities of the FAO Regional Office have continued as usual, but these are not part of the Commission's work programme and prioritized under different FAO Regional Office processes. Despite this, some of the FAO Regional Office activities are in line with recommendations and priorities identified by the commission. These are reported separately below.

Development of protocols for virtual format activities of APFIC

4. In view of the considerable number of virtual webinars workshops and the work of the *ad hoc* working group, the 36th Session also requested the development of rules of procedure to ensure effective outcomes of virtual format workshops and decision-making events. This guidance for the process of convening of the Session and working group activities, where decisions are made was developed by the Secretariat and endorsed by the 78th Executive Committee. It is presented in APFIC/23/Inf-01.

Ad hoc working group on the future of APFIC

5. The 36th Session of APFIC recognized the pressing issues of financial unsustainability and FAO's declining willingness and ability to provide regular programme funding for commission activities. The session was appraised of the principal issues and some preliminary ideas of possible means to streamline planning and seek financial resourcing of APFIC-related work and activities. It

recommended the establishment of an ‘ad hoc working group on the future of APFIC’ to look into the issues and possible options to advise the commission on its future.

6. Two meetings of the ‘ad hoc working group on the future of APFIC’ were convened virtually (18–19 August 2021, 24–25 February 2022). The second meeting in virtual session was attended by 27 representatives of 17 member countries of the Commission and the APFIC Secretariat.

7. The findings of the Ad hoc working group are discussed under Agenda item 5 and covered in working paper APFIC/23/06 and the full report is provided as APFIC/23/Info-08).

FAO Regional Office programme activities that contribute to APFIC recommendations

Marine fisheries assessment training

8. The 36th Session of APFIC emphasized the importance of fishery management grounded on science for sustainable marine and inland fisheries and acknowledged the challenges related to lack of adequate capacity for conducting stock assessment and analyses. It welcomed the development of an FAO initiative for capacity development to improve stock assessment for marine and inland applications.

9. In response to Member country requests, FAO and SEAFDEC have co-organized two regional training workshops on stock assessment (13-17 December 2021; 30 May - 7 June 2022), with the aim of obtaining the first level understanding of the current status and regional contributes to the development of a group of stock assessments for commercial fishery species in the region and for the first time, an assessment-data based assessment of major stocks in the sub-region.

10. FAO also convened the “*Regional workshop for a network of practitioners on fishery stock assessment*” from 23 to 25 January 2023, bringing together an identified group of regional stock assessment practitioners from across the Asian region, to review their methods and preliminary findings on the status of fisheries that they study in their countries. This workshop built on the two FAO and SEAFDEC co-organized regional training workshops on stock assessment. It also drew on other complementary work under parallel initiatives funded by other donors and FAO. The workshop also sought to reinvigorate some historic or existing networks of stock assessment practitioners at regional and national levels. The strategic value to APFIC Members and FAO is that the network members will contribute to improving the assessment of fishery resources in the Asian region and assist with sharing this information with FAO. It is expected that this will support FAO’s global process of collating stock assessment information and reporting on the state of global fisheries.

11. This will be discussed in Agenda Item 3.

Reporting on SDG14b indicator for small-scale fisheries

12. The 36th Session of APFIC recognized the importance of training for reporting on SDG14b. In response to the request from Member countries of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) to support national-level efforts to achieve and report on Sustainable Development Goal Target 14.b, the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in collaboration with INFOFISH convened a virtual workshop on SDG 14.b and its associated indicator 14.b.1 (6-8 July 2021). The workshop was organized to raise awareness about SDG 14.b and the proposed indicator 14.b.1 and explore the indicator methodology and related issues on data and information sources, analysis, reporting and validation, including the use of a specifically created e-learning platform. The workshop was attended by approximately 60 participants from countries in South and Southeast Asia and the report of the workshop is available at <https://www.fao.org/3/cb8250en/cb8250en.pdf>.

International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022)

13. The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2022 the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA 2022). FAO is the lead agency for celebrating the year in collaboration with other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. IYAFA 2022 was an opportunity to showcase the potential and diversity of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture, and points to the benefits which can be gained from facilitating partnerships and cooperation with fishers, fish farmers and fish workers and as well in achieving the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

14. In support of IYAFA 2022, the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has been developing awareness raising materials and convening webinars:

- a. Webinar (25 November 2021) and publication: "Restoration of productive aquatic ecosystems by communities and fisher organizations in Asia: Good practices, innovations and success stories" in collaboration with James Cook University. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8645en>
- b. Webinar "Swimming with the tide: Seizing opportunities for resilience" (30 November 2021) and publication: "*Resilience and seizing opportunities: small-scale fisheries and aquaculture businesses that thrived during the COVID-19 pandemic in South and Southeast Asia*" in collaboration with INFOFISH. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc1051en>
- c. Webinar (9 December 2021) and publication: "*Women and men in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in Asia: Barriers, constraints and opportunities towards equality and secure livelihoods*" in collaboration with AIT. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9527en>
- d. Two webinars "Celebrating diversity of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in Asia" (29-30 March 2022) in collaboration with INFOFISH
- e. Publication: "*The small-scale fisheries and aquaculture sector in Asia: Small in scale, big in value*" (IYAFA 2022 photobook) in collaboration with INFOFISH. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0026en>

Illuminating Hidden Harvest study

15. The Illuminating Hidden Harvest comprehensive study of global small-scale fisheries has been ongoing for over four years. The report and the results were launched in March 2023 as part of the International Year is support of Artisanal fisheries and aquaculture (IYAFA). As the Asia-Pacific region is home to the majority of global small-scale fishers and production, this study is an important insight to this subsector. The link to the report will be made available at the 37th Session.

Knowledge sharing for aquaculture transformation

16. The 36th Session concurred that there is a clear case for increasing access to knowledge and skills in sustainable aquaculture production practices. FAO-NACA convened a pre-consultation workshop on blue transformation of aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific Region, (15 September 2021, Virtual) as preparation for the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP) and Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA) virtual High-Level Meeting on *Aquaculture Transformation in Asia and the Pacific Region*. The High-Level Meeting was convened 22 – 23 November 2022 and brought together 66 high-level participants, including senior government policy makers; senior FAO and NACA officials; private sector business leaders; development banks and investors; and other development partners with common interests in aquaculture innovation and investment. The specific objectives of the High-Level Meeting were to identify policy, innovation and investment priorities for aquaculture transformation in the region by 2030.

17. This will be discussed under Agenda item 4 (APFIC/23/05; APFIC/23/Inf-07)

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in aquaculture

18. The 36th Session highlighted the importance of continued work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in aquaculture, under a regional AMR programme, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific have undertaken the following activities related to AMR in aquaculture.

- a. Virtual Training Course on Surveillance and Monitoring of Antimicrobial Resistance in Aquaculture (26-30 July 2021, virtual) (TCP/RAS/3702)
- b. FAO Virtual Workshop (26 October 2021, virtual) on Innovations on Aquatic Health Management towards reduction of Antimicrobial Use (AMU) and mitigation of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) (TCP/RAS/3702)
- c. Terminal workshop (23-24 November 2021, virtual) “Support mitigation of Antimicrobial Resistance risk associated with aquaculture in Asia” (TCP/RAS/3702)

Field project development under FAO-RAP programme:

Sustainable management of fisheries, marine living resources and their habitats in the Bay of Bengal region for the benefit of coastal states and communities

19. This five-year project is supported by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and is also supported by Norad. The project will support seven BOBLME member countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand) in delivering the project outcomes through a coordinated partnership including BOBP-IGO, IUCN and SEAFDEC. Each partner brings in their unique areas of competence, mandates and convening power to support delivery.

Promoting the Blue Economy and Strengthening Fisheries Governance of the Gulf of Thailand through the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries

20. FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP) is developing the Global Environment Facility (GEF) supported project “Promoting the Blue Economy and Strengthening Fisheries Governance of the Gulf of Thailand through the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries” (GoTFish). Participating countries are Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam. Executing partners are the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), Sustainable Fishery Partnership (SFP) and University of Queensland. The project document is submitted to GEF Secretariat for approval.

Increasing programme investments in sustainable aquaculture

21. Aquaculture is relevant to the recently approved GEF’s Food Systems Integrated Programme (FS-IP) which is co-led by FAO and IFAD. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has been working with Member countries to develop country concepts for project proposals. The Aquaculture dimensions of the FS-IP aims to provide the strategic thinking underpinning FAO’s support for sustainable, intensified, and regenerative aquaculture production systems that reduce environmental degradation, sustainably increase production, enhance producers’ incomes and resilience, and meet the global need for healthy, affordable food in an equitable manner.

22. The FS-IP will support country projects and programmes under GEF-8, where aquaculture-related interventions are elements in the integrated management of mosaics of productive and natural land/seascapes. Aquaculture programmes and projects may also be implemented under other GEF programmes, including the International Waters Focal Area; other GEF Focal Areas on Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Climate Change Mitigation, as well as multi-focal area and multi-trust fund projects; and as part of other Integrated Programmes, for example on Ecosystem Restoration, Blue and Green Islands.

23. FAO is also currently developing a concept for a global mariculture development programme that will, in a manner similar to the FS-IP, support the development of regenerative and sustainable mariculture projects. It is expected that FAO will develop a number of GEF Aquaculture related

projects (or components of projects, under a landscape approach) in the next biennium through the FS-IP or a global mariculture programme.

24. As part of promoting blue transformation of aquaculture in the region, a Regional Technical Cooperation Programme to support upscaling and adoption of innovations and good practices for sustainable intensification and expansion of aquaculture in Asia (TCP/RAS/3808) has been implemented in three participating countries (Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam), 2022–2023). This would contribute to improved nutrition and food security by transforming aquaculture sector through innovations and good practices by enhancing technical capacity to upscale and adopt aquaculture innovations and good practices for more efficient, resilient and sustainable blue food systems.