

# Sustained Promotion of Responsible Fisheries to Secure the Competitiveness of ASEAN Fish and Fishery Products in Intra- and Inter-regional Trade: SEAFDEC Initiative

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Since its establishment in December 1967, the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) has continued to advance the development of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for food security and poverty alleviation in the Southeast Asian region. In the span of 48 years of its existence, SEAFDEC can indeed boast of enormous technical advancements that had shifted the course of development of the region's fisheries and aquaculture towards sustainability, based on its proactive mandate *"to develop and manage the fisheries potential of the region by rational utilization of the resources for providing food security and safety of the people and alleviating poverty through transfer of new technologies, research and information dissemination activities"*. Along line with such mandate, SEAFDEC has been developing and implementing countermeasures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Southeast Asian region considering that IUU fishing activities obstruct all efforts of the Southeast Asian countries to achieve sustainability in fisheries. The progress of such endeavor by SEAFDEC was summarized in a Keynote Remarks delivered by the author *Mr. Hajime Kawamura* during the Third Meeting of the ASEAN Public-Private Taskforce for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture in Penang, Malaysia on 20-21 October 2014.

As an autonomous inter-governmental body, SEAFDEC has 11 Member Countries comprising 10 ASEAN Member States and Japan, and operates through its Bangkok-based Secretariat and five Technical Departments. These are: the Training Department (TD) in Thailand, Marine Fisheries Research Department (MFRD) in Singapore, Aquaculture Department (AQD) in the Philippines, Marine Fishery Resources Development and Management Department (MFRDMD) in Malaysia, and the very recently established Inland Fishery Resources Development and Management Department (IFRDMD) in Indonesia. It is mainly through these Departments and coordination made by its Secretariat that SEAFDEC has sustained the promotion of responsible fisheries and aquaculture for sustainable development and food security in the Southeast Asian region. Since illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing has remained uncurbed in the region impeding the efforts of many countries to attain sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture, countermeasures have been crafted

by SEAFDEC to combat IUU fishing activities while good aquaculture practices and responsible processing technologies have been advocated to ensure that the ASEAN fish and fishery products would secure its niche in the regional and international trading arena.

## Sustainable Development of Fisheries and Aquaculture

To name a few, the initiatives of SEAFDEC that are directed towards sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in the region include: (1) improvement of marine capture fisheries by promoting responsible fishing practices and enhancing the capabilities of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) in marine fisheries management; (2) promotion of integrated coastal management concepts through the implementation of community-based fisheries management for sustainable utilization of resources; (3) development of good quality seeds for aquaculture to ensure reliability of supply of seed stocks; (4) utilization of sustainable protein sources for aquafeeds to reduce pressure on capture fisheries and reduce ecological footprints; (5) promotion of responsible fish health management by addressing emerging issues on fish diseases; (6) maximum utilization of fishery resources for value-added fish products through responsible processing technologies; (7) promotion of quality and safety of fish and fishery products for human consumption by advocating to the region's fish processing industry the application of quality and assurance systems; (8) compilation of scientific-based information



for the sustainable management of pelagic fisheries as well as for other economically important aquatic species; (9) development of countermeasures to combat IUU fishing; (10) generation and dissemination of information materials for sustainable development and management of fisheries and aquaculture.

## Countermeasures to Combat IUU Fishing

The growing domestic and international demand for fish and fishery products has led to overexploitation of aquatic resources all over the world including in the Southeast Asian region. Such increasing demand has compelled fishers to catch more and more fish by any means and practices including IUU fishing operations, unconscious of the impacts that their actions would bring about that could lead to environmental degradations. If IUU fishing activities remain unchecked, this could lead not only to the overexploitation of fish stocks but also impede the recovery of fish populations that had been overfished impacting on the health of the ecosystems. The results could then be damaged and degraded aquatic environments leading to increased competition among resource users, severely



affecting the economic and social well-being of fishing communities in many developing countries, especially those extremely dependent on the natural resources.

At the global scale, IUU fishing is even difficult to quantify as it can occur in virtually any fishery from the coastal to inland waters up to the offshore areas. Such situation is very common in the Southeast Asian countries where fisheries management strategies need to be strengthened and advocated, and where resources are limited to enforce regulations such as landing controls, vessel inspections, and deployment of adequate number of patrol vessels. For such reasons, SEAFDEC has strengthened its collaborative mechanism with the ASEAN through the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Strategic Partnership (ASSP) and with the Fisheries Agency of Japan through the Japanese Trust Fund, to enable it to initiate activities aimed at improving fisheries management, managing fishing capacity, and combating IUU fishing in the Southeast Asian region (Kawamura, 2014).



Moreover, it has been becoming very obvious that the main driver of IUU fishing is personal economic benefit since a vessel which is fishing illegally is able to minimize operating costs in terms of licensing, registration, use of vessel monitoring systems, and documentation while the flag state receives the least economic benefits from such fishing activities. In order to contribute to regional efforts of combating IUU fishing, SEAFDEC with the collaboration of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) and with funding support from the Japanese Trust Fund, has developed various countermeasures that include the establishment of the Regional Fishing Vessel Record for fishing vessels 24 meters in length and over in the AMS (SEAFDEC/TD, 2014), development of the ASEAN Guidelines Preventing the Entry of Fish and Fishery Products from IUU Fishing Activities into the Supply Chain (SEAFDEC/MFRDMD, 2014a), and crafting of an ASEAN Catch Documentation

## Box 1. Countermeasures Developed by SEAFDEC for Combating IUU Fishing in Southeast Asia

### Regional Fishing Vessel Record

SEAFDEC has initiated the compilation of a Regional Fishing Vessel Record (RFVR) for fishing vessels 24 meters in length and over, with the intention of extending the record for fishing vessels below 24 meters in the near future. With strong belief that together with refined licensing systems, the RFVR could be used as a tool to combat IUU fishing in the Southeast Asian region. The SEAFDEC Council of Directors during its 45<sup>th</sup> Meeting in April 2013 approved the said compilation and subsequently, the Special Senior Officials Meeting of the Thirty-Fourth Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (Special SOM-34<sup>th</sup> AMAF) also supported the establishment of the RFVR. Since the establishment of the RFVR could not be realized without inputs from the AMS, a series of technical workshops had been convened to exchange national data and information among the AMS as well as for the development and management of the database for the RFVR. Through such fora, the understanding of the countries had been enhanced, especially on the rationale of compiling, sharing and utilizing information in the RFVR database, as this could serve as means of managing fishing capacity and combating IUU fishing in the region.

In the development of the RFVR for vessels 24 meters in length and over, the AMS committed to provide basic information that would go into the database comprising 26 items, namely: (1) Name of Vessel; (2) Vessel Registration Number; (3) Owner's Name; (4) Type of Fishing Method/Gear; (5) Port of Registry; (6) Gross Tonnage (GRT/GT); (7) Length (L); (8) Breadth (B); (9) Depth (D); (10) Engine Power; (11) Shipyard/Ship Builder; (12) Date of Vessel Launching; (13) International Radio Call Sign; (14) Engine Brand; (15) Serial Number of Engine; (16) Hull Material; (17) Date of Registration; (18) Area (Country) of Fishing Operation; (19) Nationality of Vessel (Flag); (20) Previous Name (if any); (21) Previous Flag (if any); (22) Name of Captain/Master; (23) Nationality of Captain/Master; (24) Number of Crew (maximum/minimum); (25) Nationality of Crew; and (26) IMO Number (if available). As envisioned and agreed upon by the AMS, uploading of information from the AMS into the RFVR database system by SEAFDEC should be completed by the end of October 2014 in order that online trials could be made by the AMS in November 2014. Formal launching of the RFVR for vessels 24 meters in length and over is planned during the 47<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council of Directors in April 2015.

### ASEAN Guidelines Preventing the Entry of Fish and Fishery Products from IUU Fishing into the Supply Chain

Various forms of IUU fishing activities have been encountered and experienced by many ASEAN Member States, but the major forms of IUU fishing activities occurring in the Southeast Asian region could be grouped into five (5) types: (1) illegal fishing activities within a country such as fishing without valid license or registration document, vessel with specifications different from those indicated in the fishing license, double flagging, fishing in waters outside the permitted or designated fishing areas, operating prohibited fishing gears and methods, landing of fish in unauthorized ports, transferring of catch at sea, and unreporting or misreporting of catch; (2) unauthorized transshipment and landing of fish/catch across borders, especially for fishing vessels operating in a country but transshipping or landing their fish/catch across borders without authorization; (3) poaching in the EEZs of other countries usually carried out by foreign fishing vessels illegally fishing in another country's waters; (4) illegal fishing and trading practices of live reef food fish, reef-based ornamentals and endangered aquatic species, including the practice of using chemicals and other unregulated practices to collect and trade live reef food fish, as well as reef-based ornamentals and endangered aquatic species for consumption and for the aquarium industry; and (5) IUU fishing in the high seas and RFMO areas including a range of illicit activities, such as fishing without permission or during out-of-season, using outlawed types of fishing gears, disregarding catch quotas, unreporting and misreporting catch volumes and species.

For the development of the ASEAN Guidelines, the AMS have been encouraged to: (1) **Manage Fishing Activities within a Country** by controlling fishing access through proper registration and licensing system of fishing vessels and gears including their accurate specifications, updating related laws and regulations as well as systems of reporting catch and compiling appropriate logbook information, and monitoring of all fishing vessels by maintaining records and their performance with respect to compliance with their national laws and regulations including current owners and operators authorized to undertake fishing activities at designated fishing areas; (2) **Regulate Transshipment and Landing of Fish/Catch across Borders** by establishing formal arrangements with respect to landings between bordering countries, conducting regular bilateral/multi-lateral meetings to discuss mutual agreements on licensing system, data recording, and sharing of information on licensing system, regulations, and other relevant information, and strengthening measures to regulate fishing vessels accessing their ports for transshipping and/or landing catch and collect and exchange relevant data including origin of catch among neighboring countries; (3) **Prevent Poaching in the EEZs of Other Countries** by taking appropriate actions against fishing vessels operating illegally beyond their designated areas, strengthening cooperation in the compilation of lists of vessels reported to have been illegally operating (poaching) beyond their respective EEZs, and sharing such lists among relevant countries, and supporting the regular updating of information for the Regional Fishing Vessels Record (RFVR); (4) **Control Illegal Fishing and Trading Practices of Live Reef Food Fish (LRFF), Reef-based Ornamentals, and Endangered Aquatic Species** by conducting regular inter- and intra- meetings among relevant authorities (including customs departments) and exporting companies for mutual agreements on harvesting practices and data reporting of live reef food fish, reef-based ornamentals, and endangered aquatic species; adopting appropriate mechanisms for the monitoring and data collection of live reef food fish and reef-based ornamentals trades; preventing the export of endangered aquatic species, except for research and experimental purposes for which such export should be accompanied by appropriate documents; and engaging the participation of small-scale/artisanal fishers, who account for majority of LRFF production, in co-management to enhance their awareness of the impacts of illegal fishing and trading of such aquatic species; and (5) **Strengthen the Management of Fishing in the High Seas and RFMO Areas** by strengthening respective port state measures including control of port entry, use of port services, requirements for pre-port entry notification and designation of ports for fishing vessels, implementing where appropriate observer programs in accordance with relevant national, regional or international regulations with respect to high seas fisheries; and cooperating with the relevant RFMOs in complying with their Catch Document Schemes to prevent the landing of fish and fishery products from IUU fishing activities in the RFMO areas.

During the series of Technical Consultations, the AMS agreed that the ASEAN Guidelines could serve as basis for the AMS in formulating relevant policies and provide an enabling environment for a clear direction and understanding of the need to prevent the entry of IUU fish and fishery products into the supply chain. The AMS also considered developing and/or strengthening their respective strategies and measures based on the Guidelines, which is expected to be implemented in the region as soon as possible.

## Box 1. Countermeasures Developed by SEAFDEC for Combating IUU Fishing in Southeast Asia (Cont'd)

### ASEAN Catch Documentation Scheme

Considering that IUU fishing activities remained active around the world, the international community has enhanced cognizance of the value of the legally-binding instrument on port state measures, and the market-driven measure known as the “EC Regulation 1005/2008” to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which requires that countries exporting fish and fishery products to the EU must adopt such EC Regulation. Meanwhile, many Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs) have also developed their respective Catch Documentation Schemes as means of discouraging IUU fishing activities in the RFMOs’ areas and/or in the high seas with the objectives of tracking fish catch being traded in their management areas and minimizing the opportunities for fish products acquired through illegal, unreported or unregulated (IUU) fishing from reaching the markets. Under such measure, countries that are parties to tuna RFMOs, e.g. WCPFC, IOTC are bound to implement the RFMOs’ Catch Documentation Schemes to be able to import and export tuna and tuna products.

Considering that intra-regional trade and international trade of fish and fishery products is beyond trading with the EU or other framework under RFMOs, AMS considered it important to develop measures that could provide the countries with guidance in improving the traceability system of capture fisheries and combating IUU fishing in the region. The AMS therefore recognized that a regional catch documentation scheme could be used as one of the management tools to improve and strengthen better management of fisheries in the ASEAN region. In view therefore of such circumstances, the AMS proposed that a regional catch documentation system could be developed taking into consideration the format, standard and information requirements of the existing schemes of importing countries, but simplified in order to enhance its applicability by small-scale fisheries in the region. Such regional catch documentation could be called the “ASEAN Catch Documentation Scheme or ACDS”, depending on the requirements of the AMS but aligned with international market-driven measures. In the development of such ACDS, SEAFDEC has provided the platforms for discussion/consultations for drafting the ACDS. Along this process however, it is necessary that the AMS should work together with importing countries in developing the ACDS which could facilitate not only intra-regional trade in fish and fishery products, but also enhance the cooperation among the AMS for the realization of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015. With such conceptual plan, the “Development of ASEAN Catch Documentation Scheme” was supported by the SEAFDEC Council during its 45<sup>th</sup> Meeting in April 2013 and endorsed by 21<sup>st</sup> ASWGF in July 2013, and supported by the Special SOM-34<sup>th</sup> AMAF in August 2013.

The ongoing development of the ACDS, which is being spearheaded by SEAFDEC/MFRDMD with the cooperation of the SEAFDEC Secretariat, puts more focus on marine capture fisheries with the main objective of ensuring that a unified framework is available for the AMS to enhance the traceability of their fish and fishery products, thus contributing to the overall efforts towards effective management of fisheries in the AMS. Specifically, the ACDS would also assure AMS that the credibility of the region’s fish and fishery products is improved for intra-regional and international trade, considering that the entry of fish and fishery products from IUU fishing activities into the supply chain could be prevented for the benefit of all stakeholders. At this initial stage, the scope of the ACDS shall apply to catch of fish and its fishery products with the exception of: freshwater fish and fishery products; aquaculture products obtained from fry or larvae; ornamental fishes, oysters (live), scallops including queen scallops of the genus *Pecten*, *Chlamys* or *Placopecten* (live, fresh or chilled); frozen Coquilles St. Jacques (*Pecten maximus*); other scallops (fresh or chilled); mussels; snails other than those obtained from the sea; prepared and preserved mollusks; corals; and CITES-listed species; as well as to trading of marine fish and fishery products, processed or not, originating from AMS-flagged fishing vessels. Under the ACDS, transshipments, landings of domestic products, exports, imports, and re-exports, under jurisdiction of AMS, would require that all catches must be accompanied by a catch certificate and details of transshipment. Although the ACDS would not cover export/import of fish parts other than the meat, including head, eyes, roe, gut, fin, skin, tail, with the exception of shark fins, it would cover the catch from small fishing vessels (which meet the criteria) that can contribute to trade among the AMS and in such case, a simplified catch document would be applied accordingly. Therefore, the ACDS is intended not only to facilitate intra-regional trade but also to demonstrate the commitment of AMS to combat IUU fishing in the region. Furthermore, a subsequent phase might be developed for all fish and fishery products coming from outside the region.

System (SEAFDEC/MFRDMD, 2014b and 2014c). The development of the ASEAN Catch Documentation Scheme (ACDS) would take into consideration the EC Regulation 1005/2008 to facilitate export of fish and fishery products to the EU countries by the AMS, while the ACDS would focus more on inter- and intra-regional trade of fish and fishery products from marine capture fisheries. The details of such countermeasures are shown in **Box 1**. Furthermore, through the efforts of SEAFDEC, the AMS had initiated the development of policy recommendations and the Plan of Action for regional cooperation on sustainable fisheries resources management in the ASEAN region, which had been used as basis for crafting of the Regional Plan of Action on Sustainable Utilization of Neritic Tuna Resources in the ASEAN Region or RPOA-Neritic Tuna for subsequent adoption by the AMS (SEAFDEC,

2014a). Recently, the Regional Policy Recommendations on Conservation and Management of Eel Resources and Promotion of Sustainable Eel Aquaculture had been developed which would pave the way for the mapping of the regional plans for the conservation and management of eel resources as means of ensuring the sustainable utilization of eel resources in the Southeast Asian region (SEAFDEC, 2014b).

### Way Forward

It is recognized that IUU fishing activities bring about negative impacts on the economic, social and ecological attributes of fisheries that affect food security and efforts to alleviate poverty in fishing communities. Specifically, IUU fishing activities contribute to the reduction in food



supply, lost livelihoods and state revenues, diminishing fish stocks and damaging the ecosystems, with the most devastating effects concentrated in developing countries due to their greater vulnerability. These illegal activities form a complex web – from illegal fishing activities to illegal trade, and finally to persistent catching from unsustainably fished stocks with the underlying objective of getting high profit from illegally caught fish. Moreover, the driving forces that lead to the rampant occurrence of IUU fishing in the waters of Southeast Asia could include: inadequate regulatory control over national fishers and fishing vessels, insufficient effective management tools to manage fishing capacity, weak enforcement of fishing legislations, evading the payments of fishing fees and taxes, absence of or inadequate maritime boundary agreements, and incompatible legal frameworks for combating IUU fishing.

It is therefore the commitment of SEAFDEC combined with those of other national, regional and international initiatives and efforts, to contribute to the overall efforts of developing sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Southeast Asian region not only for increased fisheries productions but also for improved national economies for food security and livelihoods of peoples in the region. The efforts of SEAFDEC towards attaining more technological advancements would not end with the measures discussed above, as SEAFDEC would continue to boost the development of fisheries and aquaculture in the Southeast Asian region towards sustainability in the years to come. More particularly, SEAFDEC also conforms to the need to strengthen regional and sub-regional efforts to combat IUU fishing as one of the priority actions of the AMS in parallel with the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by December 2015.



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