



**Regional Plan of Action
on Sustainable Utilization of Neritic Tunas
in the ASEAN Region**

(RPOA-Neritic Tunas)



Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center



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Preface

Recognizing the importance of neritic tuna fisheries in the Southeast Asian region, cooperation to promote the sustainable utilization of neritic tunas has therefore become necessary at the regional or sub-regional levels. Under such circumstance, the 45th Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council endorsed the proposal of SEAFDEC to conduct regular stakeholders' consultations for the development of the Regional Plan of Action for Sustainable Utilization of Neritic Tunas in the ASEAN Region (RPOA-Neritic Tunas). With funding support from the SEAFDEC-Sweden Project, SEAFDEC together with the Member Countries organized a series of Consultative Meetings, the first of which was convened in Songkhla Province, Thailand in October 2013 with the objective of compiling the main issues/problems on conservation and management of neritic tunas encountered by the ASEAN Member States, to be used as inputs for drafting the RPOA-Neritic Tunas. The second was the Experts Group Meeting in Krabi Province, Thailand from 18 to 20 June 2014, which aimed to finalize the Regional Plan of Action and discuss the work plan on Sustainable Utilization of Neritic Tuna Resources in the ASEAN Region. These Meetings were attended by the representatives from the ASEAN countries, namely: Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok, ASEAN Tuna Working Group, ASEAN-USAID Maximizing Agricultural Revenue through Knowledge, Enterprise Development, and Trade (MARKET) Project, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, and USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia were also represented during the Meetings. The draft RPOA-Neritic Tunas that emanated from the said consultative meetings had been circulated to all SEAFDEC Member Countries for revision and consideration, after which the draft was endorsed by the 17th Meeting of the FCG/ASSP in December 2014. The final draft of the RPOA-Neritic Tunas, which was subsequently adopted during the 47th Meeting of the Council of SEAFDEC in April 2015, has been cleaned for publication.

List of Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EAFM	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management
FADs	Fish Aggregating Devices
FCG/ASSP	Fisheries Consultative Group of the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Strategic Partnership
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPOA-IUU Fishing	National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
RFMOs	Regional Fisheries Management Organizations
RPOA-IUU Fishing	Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
RPOA-Neritic Tunas	Regional Plan of Action on Sustainable Utilization of Neritic Tunas in the ASEAN Region
SEAFDEC	Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System

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Regional Plan of Action on Sustainable Utilization of Neritic Tunas in the ASEAN Region

Objective I:

Determining available data and information, improving data collection and developing key indicators

Issue 1.1: Insufficient data/information

Action Plan: Improve Data Collection and Analysis for Neritic Tunas

- Compilation and review of existing data and information on neritic tunas from all related national agencies to understand the status, trend and biological parameters
- Review and strengthening of data collection systems on neritic tunas
- Review of policies, rules and regulations with regards to information collection and sharing
- Implementation of collection system on catch data of neritic tunas based on the Regional Framework for Fishery Statistics of Southeast Asia
- Regular updating of data based on independent fisheries surveys conducted by research institutions
- Introduction of the use of logbook and observer/trainer onboard program, if not already in place
- Capacity building for data enumerators, observers, port inspectors, scientists, or other key data informants on species identification and biological information
 - Provision of reference materials to data collectors, e.g. colored pictures of fish, fish identification handbooks, mobile applications
- Improvement of data/information for a common pool of neritic tuna database

Issue 1.2: Undetermined neritic tuna stocks status

Action Plan: Assess Neritic Tuna Stocks and Develop Resource Key Indicators

- Determination of the type of data required for stock assessment or key indicator analysis
- Utilization of the existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for data collection to determine fisheries key indicators on status and trend of neritic tunas
- Encouraging the conduct of research on neritic tunas at national level (e.g. stock assessment, biological, genetics, tagging program etc.)
- Integration of independent fisheries data with routine data from statistics to improve the analysis of neritic tuna stock assessment at national level
- Strengthening capacity building on stock assessment
- Conduct and regular updating of national stock assessment of neritic tunas
- Seeking technical cooperation with NGOs, RFMOs, relevant research institutions for the conduct of research on neritic tunas

Objective II:

Improving sustainable fisheries management

Issue 2.1: Open access

Action Plan: Promote Management of Fishing Capacity

- Control of fishing effort and capacity at national level
 - Determination of Total Allowable Catch (TAC)
 - Estimation of the economic valuations and/or biological success of TAC
 - Issuance of numbers of fishing licenses at optimal level
 - Development of operation strategy considering economic valuation

- Registration and licensing system of fishing vessels
 - Mandatory registration of fishing vessels and licensing to operate based on national policies
 - Provision of authorized foreign fishing vessels conducting fishing operations in national waters of concerned countries based on bilateral agreement
- Regulation on fishing gears
 - Registration of fishing gear licenses or fishing permits based on national policies
 - Prohibition of active fishing gears (*e.g.* purse seine, ring net, Danish seine, trawls, etc.) within fishing zones for small-scale fisheries based on national policies
 - Regulation on mesh size of nets, where applicable depending on the type of gears and purposes of fishing
- Application of selective fishing gears and/or practices

Issue 2.2: Inadequate management of neritic tuna resources in some areas

Action Plan: Promote Sustainable Utilization of Neritic Tuna Resources

- FADs management plan/scheme
 - Regulation on the use of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) (*i.e.* recording the types/numbers, mapping, and use of environment-friendly materials)
 - Development of FADs management plan at national level
- Regulation on fishing areas and/or fishing seasons
 - Implementation of closed season for neritic tunas, *i.e.* during spawning season and nursing grounds based on best available scientific information and recommendations
 - Establishment of fisheries management zoning areas
 - Provision of alternative livelihoods to small-scale fishers (during closed season, if relevant)

- Protection of critical habitats and enhancement of fisheries resources
 - Deployment of fish enhancing devices, artificial reefs or fish apartments relevant to neritic tunas
 - Establishment of fisheries *refugia* and/or fish sanctuaries

Issue 2.3: Inadequate understanding of management and conservation measures

Action Plan: Enhance Understanding of Management and Conservation Measures of Neritic Tunas

- Enhancement of awareness of stakeholders on the importance of conservation and management measures
- Conduct of comparative studies of good practices learnt from other countries, RFMOs and international organizations
- Arrangement of regular stakeholders' (including scientists, managers, policy makers, and fishers) consultations/meetings on management and conservation measures
- Creation of platforms/fora to facilitate cooperation among scientists and managers
- Development of information, education and communication (IEC) programs on sustainable use of resources

Issue 2.4: Negative impacts of climate change to changes of neritic tuna stocks

Action Plan: Mitigate the Impacts of Climate Change on Neritic Tuna Stocks

- Encouraging the involvement of ASEAN Member States in regional/ sub-regional research/study on the impact, adaptation, and mitigation measures of climate change on fisheries particularly on neritic tunas

**Objective III:
Improving sustainable interaction between fisheries
and marine ecosystem**

Issue 3.1: Negative impacts of fisheries to marine ecosystem

Action Plan: Reduce Negative Impacts of Neritic Tuna Fisheries to Marine Ecosystem

- Implementation of Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM)
- Encouraging the conduct of risk assessment on the impacts of neritic tuna fisheries to marine ecosystem
- Conduct of R&D on suitable fishing methods and practices for sustainable utilization of neritic tuna resources and promote to ASEAN Member States
- Promotion of the use of responsible fishing technology and practices
- Development and adaptation of effective management and conservation measures to minimize the catching of small neritic tunas by purse seine/ ring nets
- Establishment of fisheries *refugia* system to protect the juvenile and larval stages

**Objective IV:
Improving compliance to rules and regulations
and access to markets**

Issue 4.1: Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing

Action Plan: Combat IUU Fishing Occurring in Southeast Asian Region

- Development of respective National Plans of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (NPOA-IUU Fishing)
- Strengthen the implementation of NPOA-IUU Fishing (for countries with NPOA-IUU Fishing in place)

- Promotion of cooperation among ASEAN Member States and with other RPOA-IUU participating countries in combating IUU fishing under the RPOA-IUU Framework
- Strengthening coordination with the local governments, private sector and other agencies concerned to improve compliance on rules and regulations
- Regulations on transshipment
 - Establishment of procedures on transshipment of catch
- Establishment of national fisheries observer scheme for neritic tunas
- Application of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)
 - Implementation and/or strengthening of VMS program based on national policies
- Elimination of double flagging
 - Exchange of vessel information (upon request) among concerned ASEAN Member States
- Eradication of poaching
 - Establishment of bilateral and multilateral networking to prevent poaching activities
 - Development of measures to regulate and deny access to landing of poached fish based on national legal framework
- Strengthening of surveillance activities and enforcement
- Prohibition of importation, landing or transshipment at port of neritic tunas from vessels presumed to have carried out IUU fishing activities in the ASEAN region without prior clarification from vessel owners or concerned flag States
- Development of measures to refrain the conduct of business transaction with owners and vessels presumed to have carried out IUU fishing activities

Issue 4.2: Inadequate infrastructures in fishing ports/landing sites

Action Plan: Improve Infrastructures in Fishing Ports/Landing Sites

- Promotion of the development of infrastructures such as auction facilities, jetties, water supply systems, ice processing plants to be completely available in fishing ports and landing sites
- Development of the ASEAN standard (minimum requirements) for the management of fishing ports and landing sites (including safety, hygiene and sanitation standards)

Issue 4.3: Post-harvest losses/product quality deterioration

Action Plan: Improve Post-harvest Techniques and Product Quality

- Provision of technical support to promote proper handling and preservation of neritic tunas onboard and at ports
- Conduct of assessment of post-harvest losses of neritic tunas and describing the various ways of reducing post-harvest losses
- Exchange of fishing and post-harvest technology or preservation techniques onboard as well as design/materials of fishing boats to reduce post-harvest losses

Issue 4.4: Intra-regional and international trade

Action Plan: Enhance Intra-regional and International Trade

- Catch documentation and traceability system/scheme
 - Development and implementation of traceability system to monitor movement of neritic tuna fish/products in the supply chain for export (*i.e.* origin of catch, transport, processing, storage and distribution)
 - Implementation of ASEAN Catch Documentation System/Scheme by ASEAN Member States for neritic tuna fish and fishery products at national level
 - Encouraging the implementation of the Fisheries Improvement Project Protocol (FIPP), where applicable and application of eco-labeling scheme

- Facilitation and strengthening of intra-regional and international trade at national level
- Development of Harmonized System (HS) Code especially for neritic tunas (regional issue)

**Objective V:
Addressing social issues**

Issue 5.1: Inadequate benefits for people involved in neritic tuna fisheries and industries

Action Plan: Improve the Benefits for People Involved in Neritic Tuna Fisheries and Industries

- Implementation of socio-economic surveys (*i.e.* working condition of fishers, their income and the living standard) in local communities, large-scale fisheries and ancillary industries to gather baseline information
- Development of arrangements and partnership between fisheries authorities or related agencies and fisheries industries regarding implementation of labor standards in fisheries in accordance with national laws, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Work in Fishing Convention of 2007 (C188/Work in Fishing Convention, 2007) No. 188 and other related ILO Conventions
- Reinforcement of rights, privileges and responsibilities of fish workers and others involved in fishing industry in accordance with national labor laws and regulations with the purpose of improving the welfare of people engaged in fisheries
- Facilitating the cooperation between neighboring countries taking into account the importance of migrant labors

Issue 5.2: Working conditions and labor issues

Action Plan: Improve Working Conditions of Labor

- Prevention of child labor under the age of 15 years (or less than 18 years) working in tuna fisheries sectors in accordance with ILO Conventions
- Recognizing security and safety issues for all types of fishing activities by implementing skills training program
- Promotion of safety requirements at sea with capacity building and training for people engaged in tuna fisheries and related activities

Objective VI: Enhancing regional cooperation

Issue 6.1: Lack of Sub-regional action plans for neritic tuna fisheries

Action Plan: Enhance/Develop Sub-regional Action Plans for Neritic Tuna Fisheries

- Reviewing the existing action plans in sub-regions such as Sulu-Sulawesi Seas, Gulf of Thailand, South China Sea, and Andaman Sea
- Establishment of cooperation on R&D to support sub-regional management of neritic tuna fisheries
- Exchanging of information among ASEAN Member States on legal framework, policies & management, trade rules & regulations at sub-regional and regional levels on neritic tuna fisheries
- Encouraging the participation of ASEAN Member States in sub-regional fora and consultations organized by regional fishery management organizations such as IOTC, if applicable and other regional fora

Issue 6.2: Insufficient information on status and trends of neritic tunas at sub-regional level

Action Plan: Assessment of the Status and Trends of Neritic Tunas at Sub-Regional Level

- Establishment of the SEAFDEC scientific working group on neritic tunas for regional stock assessment and providing scientific advice for policy considerations on neritic tunas management
- Conduct of regular meetings of SEAFDEC scientific working group at a sub-regional and regional levels
- Conduct of regional tagging program on neritic tunas

Issue 6.3: Limited support to intra-regional and international trade

Action Plan: Enhancing Intra-regional and International Trade

- Development of joint trade promotions within and outside the region through the ASEAN Tuna Working Group
- Promotion of bilateral/multilateral cooperation on trade of neritic tunas among ASEAN Member States
- Promotion of the development of ASEAN Catch Documentation Systems/ Schemes
- Enhancement of the promotion of neritic tuna fish and fishery products from small-scale operators
- Enforcement of compliance by private sectors on trade regulations

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