



# SEAFDEC NEWSLETTER

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## The Regional Symposium on Marine Debris and Microplastics in Southeast Asia



On 30 March 2026, the SEAFDEC Secretariat hosted the “Regional Symposium on Marine Debris and Microplastics in Southeast Asia” in Bangkok, Thailand. The Symposium was attended by representatives from ASEAN Member States, as well as officials from the SEAFDEC Secretariat,

TD, MFRDMD, and IFRDMD. It also brought together experts and representatives from relevant partner organizations, including international organizations, academia, and the private sector, such as ASEAN, FAO, COBSEA, and JAIF, among others.

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## EDITORIAL

During the first quarter of 2026, SEAFDEC implemented a wide range of activities addressing key regional priorities in fisheries and aquaculture. A key highlight was the Regional Symposium on Marine Debris and Microplastics in Southeast Asia, which showcased significant achievements and findings from project implementation, particularly on abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), as well as broader research on marine debris and microplastics. Building on this, SEAFDEC organized a series of Regional Technical Meetings to develop Technical Guidelines for assessing, preventing, and removing ALDFG in the region.

Several important regional events were also conducted during the quarter. These included an online meeting on Data Submission for the SEAFDEC Fishery Statistical Database, which addressed challenges faced by ASEAN Member States (AMSs) in reporting fishery statistics under the new Statistics Framework (2024 Edition), as well as the Project Steering Committee Meeting of the Blue Horizon Project. In addition, SEAFDEC convened a regional workshop on Information Exchange on Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance

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## The 2<sup>nd</sup> Project Steering Committee Meeting convened for the Blue Horizontal Seaweed Aquaculture Project



The SEAFDEC Project Management Unit (PMU), in collaboration with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Philippines (BFAR), hosted the “2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Project Steering Committee (2-PSC) of the Blue Horizon: Ocean Relief through Seaweed Aquaculture Project,” in Palawan, the Philippines. The 2-PSC was attended by PSC members comprising high-level representatives from fisheries

agencies and environment agencies, namely the Department of Agriculture of the Philippines, Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines, SIAP, and SEAFDEC, while the representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Viet Nam, Department of Fisheries and Surveillance Viet Nam, joined online. The 2-PSC was also attended

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## EDITORIAL

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(MCS), and a workshop on strengthening regional fisheries governance and technology integration to combat IUU fishing. These activities provided platforms for sharing regional experiences and promoting the adoption of innovative MCS technologies.

SEAFDEC also organized a webinar on Multispecies/Multigear (MSMG) Fisheries Management and a seminar marking International Women's Day, fostering collective efforts toward advancing gender equality in the fisheries sector. Meanwhile, various research studies and surveys were carried out on topics such as waste and pollution management, fishing gear marking, community-based resource management, catch rates and species composition, and the squid supply chain.

In the area of aquaculture, SEAFDEC launched a spiny lobster farming initiative aimed at strengthening a high-value industry while making use of abundant seed resources. Training on good aquaculture practices was also conducted, alongside efforts to promote single oyster culture using HDPE baskets.

Collaboration with regional and international partners remained a key priority. SEAFDEC actively participated in several events, including the IMCS Network General Membership Meeting, the BOBLME II Thematic Preparatory Session, a webinar on global experiences in regional cooperation to curb IUU fishing, and a solar cell training program. These engagements provided opportunities to share SEAFDEC's progress, key achievements, and lessons learned, contributing to broader regional cooperation.

Another notable development was the introduction of the new badge of the Regional Fisheries Policy Network (RFPN) for 2026, marking a one-year term aimed at strengthening regional and sub-regional cooperation in fisheries policy among AMSs. Furthermore, SEAFDEC undertook a mission to Japan to engage with fisheries-related agencies and collaborating institutions, focusing on capacity building for SEAFDEC staff and exploring potential areas for future collaboration. ✕

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## The Regional Symposium on Marine Debris and Microplastics in Southeast Asia (Continued from page 1)

The Symposium highlighted key achievements and findings from project implemented under the “Regional Collaborative Research and Capacity Building for Monitoring and Reduction of Marine Debris from Fisheries in Southeast Asia,” funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), focusing on abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), research on marine debris and marine microplastics, and their environmental impacts. It also served as a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences from global, regional, and national initiatives and actions to address these challenging issues, with a particular focus on the

fisheries sector. It also identified priority areas for capacity building and research and clarified the role of the fisheries sector in addressing marine debris challenges in the ASEAN region. In addition, presentations showcased innovative “closed-loop” recycling solutions and biodegradable fishing gear from the private sector as practical tools for the fishing industry.

At the end of the Symposium, a summary of key messages and recommendations on future actions to address ALDFG was conducted. These recommendations are essential for

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## The 2<sup>nd</sup> Project Steering Committee Meeting convened for the Blue Horizontal Seaweed Aquaculture Project

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by observers from BFAR, SEAFDEC Secretariat, SEAFDEC/AQD, and WWF.

The 2-PSC was officially opened with remarks by *Ms. Drusila Esther E. Bayate*, Undersecretary for Fisheries of the Department of Agriculture, who chaired the meeting and highlighted the importance of advancing sustainable seaweed aquaculture in Southeast Asia. She emphasized strengthening seaweed value chains to support fisherfolk livelihoods while protecting marine ecosystems through strong regional collaboration. The meeting was further honored by opening remarks from SEAFDEC Secretary-General, *Ms. Sampan Panjarat*, who underscored the importance of strengthening regional collaboration among WWF-US, SEAFDEC, Philippine BFAR, and Viet Nam partners to ensure effective project implementation and support coastal livelihoods and marine ecosystems.

The 2-PSC is aimed at assessing progress and planning the next steps for the implementation. The PSC members reviewed the achievements since the 1-PSC, addressed implementation risks, and approved upcoming annual workplans and budgets, key steps to keep the multi-country project on track through

2028. Discussions also spotlighted gender mainstreaming, stakeholder engagement, and improved monitoring and evaluation frameworks, ensuring that benefits reach coastal communities equitably. Moreover, 2-PSC is also aiming at strengthening coordination among regional and national project teams while ensuring compliance with global reporting standards required by GEF funding mechanisms.

The Project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by WWF-US. The regional initiative, led by SEAFDEC, together with national partners in the Philippines and Viet Nam, aims to transform seaweed value chains into drivers of ecosystem restoration and inclusive economic growth. Its four interconnected components aim to:

- Strengthen regional capacity for sustainable seaweed value chains
  - Improve enabling policies in the Philippines and Viet Nam
  - Support production, processing, and market development
  - Enhance monitoring, knowledge sharing, and regional learning systems
- ✕

## The Regional Symposium on Marine Debris and Microplastics in Southeast Asia *(Continued from page 2)*

ensuring the long-term sustainability of fisheries resources and the marine environment in the ASEAN region. These efforts are expected to strengthen the ASEAN-wide response to marine debris by fostering a unified, evidence-based

strategy to protect marine ecosystems and ensure the sustainability of fisheries.

The Symposium is one of the activities under the ASEAN Cooperation Project on “Regional Collaborative Research

and Capacity Building for Monitoring and Reduction of Marine Debris from Fisheries in Southeast Asia,” funded by JAIF and implemented by the SEAFDEC Secretariat in collaboration with TD, MFRDMD, and IFRDMD. ❏

## TD welcomes Kyushu University delegation for study visit

On 6 March 2026, the SEAFDEC/TD welcomed eight representatives from Kyushu University, Japan. The delegation toured TD’s specialized facilities, including the research vessel M.V. SEAFDEC, to observe the technical infrastructure supporting regional fisheries development.



The program commenced with a warm welcome from *Mr. Koichi Tahara*, the Deputy Chief of the Training

Department. This was followed by comprehensive presentations designed to provide the delegation with deeper insights into fisheries development, as

well as highlight Japan’s significant contributions through SEAFDEC. Key topics included: SEAFDEC’s regional role and mission, core activities of the Training Department, Japanese Trust Fund (JTF) initiatives supporting Southeast Asian fisheries and aquaculture, efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and CITES-related initiatives, specifically the eel project. ❏

## TD and DOF Thailand convenes 2<sup>nd</sup> Consultation Meeting on Collaborative Training and Research Projects



SEAFDEC/TD and the Department of Fisheries (DOF) Thailand jointly convened the “Second Consultative Meeting on the Collaborative Training and Research Projects” on 9 March 2026 at DOF in Bangkok, Thailand. The Meeting brought together 33 participants

from DOF Thailand and TD, including senior officials and technical experts. The meeting aimed to review the progress of four (4) projects initiated in 2025 and discuss the proposed seven (7) projects for implementation in 2026.

These projects cover several priority areas, including the application of solar energy to reduce operational costs, the testing of acoustic technology to mitigate impacts on marine animals, studies on vessel monitoring systems, training on inland fishing gear, hydroacoustic techniques, promotion of gender equality, freshwater inland EAFM,

R programming to support fisheries resource management, monitoring carbon emissions from fishing vessels, assessment of anchovy light-luring fisheries catch rates, and resource valuation of Rayong Bay.

The Meeting resulted in the effective implementation of the Collaborative Program between the DOF Thailand and TD. The DOF Thailand and TD plan to convene the Third Consultative Meeting on the Collaborative Training and Research Projects tentatively in July 2026. ❏

## A team from Zeniya Ocean Service Engineering Ltd. visits SEAFDEC



On 14 January 2026, the SEAFDEC Secretariat welcomed a delegation from Zeniya Ocean Service Engineering, Ltd., led by *Mr. Koji Hattori*, together with staff from Zeni Lite Buoy Co., Ltd. The delegation was accompanied by *Mr. Akito Sato*, Executive Advisor

of Fudo Tetra Corporation and former Deputy Secretary-General of SEAFDEC.

During the visit, the delegation introduced the services provided by Zeni Lite Buoy Co., Ltd., including buoys and floating piers made from

various materials, including aluminium, concrete, and polyethylene, to suit different applications and operational requirements. In view of emerging needs for port facilities with reduced environmental impact and lower carbon emissions, as well as the demand for improved infrastructure suitable for small-scale fishing vessels, it was noted that the application of these technologies could be further studied. Such efforts could be undertaken by the company in collaboration with relevant partners, with a view to identifying best practices that could be promoted in the future. ❏

# DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

## SEAFDEC mission visits fisheries-related agencies and collaborating institutions in Japan



From 26 to 29 January 2026, SEAFDEC, led by the Secretary-General *Ms. Sampan Panjarat* and Deputy Secretary-General *Mr. Koichi Tahara*, paid courtesy visits to fisheries-related agencies and collaborating institutions in Japan.

On the first day, during the visit to the Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency (FRA), SEAFDEC was warmly welcomed by the FRA President, *Dr. Ichiro Nakayama*, together with senior staff members. During the discussion, SEAFDEC expressed its sincere appreciation for FRA's continued support to SEAFDEC activities over the past year, while potential areas for future cooperation and support were also discussed.

Subsequently, on the same day, the Mission made a courtesy call on the Fisheries Agency of Japan and met with *Mr. Hitoshi Fujita*, Director-General of the Fisheries Agency, and *Mr. Takumi Fukuda*, Councilor of the Resources Management Department and SEAFDEC Council Director for Japan. For several decades, SEAFDEC has received continued support from the Fisheries Agency through the Japanese Trust Fund (JTF). For the period 2025–2029, SEAFDEC is implementing JTF-7, which supports nine projects aimed at enhancing the capabilities of fisheries and aquaculture development in Southeast Asia. At the end of the day, a courtesy call was made on the Tokyo University of Marine Science

and Technology (TUMSAT), where the SEAFDEC delegation was welcomed by the President of TUMSAT, *Dr. Toshio Iseki*, together with other executive and academic members. Noting that recent collaboration has focused on deploying TUMSAT scientists to support SEAFDEC technical activities, as well as capacity-building for SEAFDEC staff, the discussion also provided an opportunity to explore potential areas for future cooperation.

On 27 January 2026, SEAFDEC met with *Mr. Jun Hirono*, President of Marino-Forum 21 (MF21), together with MF21 staff members. Over the years, MF21 has played an important role in facilitating SEAFDEC's collaboration with the Japanese academic community, which provides technical support and strengthens SEAFDEC staff knowledge and capacity, thereby contributing to the balanced and sustainable development of fisheries in Southeast Asia. Subsequently, a media briefing session was organized at the Fisheries Agency, where the Secretary-General, *Ms. Sampan Panjarat*, reaffirmed SEAFDEC's pivotal role in advancing the sustainable management and development of fisheries and aquaculture in Southeast Asia. In her presentation entitled "Advancing Sustainable Fisheries Development in Southeast Asia through Collaborative SEAFDEC Initiatives," she highlighted SEAFDEC's technical achievements and its role in bridging science and policy at the regional level. These achievements have

been made possible through support from various Japanese funding mechanisms, including the JTF, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Japan–ASEAN Integration Fund, as well as contributions from other governments and development partners.

Subsequently, on 28 January 2026, the team visited and observed a research vessel under Kaiyo Engineering Co., Ltd. at Muroran, Hokkaido, Japan. The visit provided SEAFDEC staff with an understanding of the management and operation of research vessels and key considerations in vessel procurement.

Finally, on 29 January 2026, the SEAFDEC delegation visited the Faculty of Fisheries Sciences, Hokkaido University, and was welcomed by the Vice Dean, Professor *Dr. Mukai Toru*, together with faculty members. The delegation visited the Oshoro-maru research and training vessel and undertook a campus tour, before concluding the visit with the signing of an extension of the Arrangement for Scientific, Educational, and Technical Cooperation between SEAFDEC and Hokkaido University, originally established in 2016, for a further five-year period. ❖

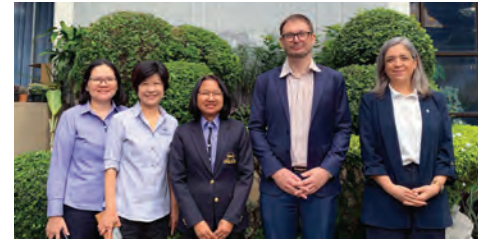


## SEAFDEC Secretary-General warmly welcomes FAO representatives

On 16 March 2026, SEAFDEC Secretary-General, *Ms. Sampan Panjarat*, warmly welcomed the Senior Fishery Officer, *Dr. Benjamin Belton*, and Fishery and Aquaculture Officer, *Ms. Angela Lentisco*, from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO/RAP), which is based in Bangkok, Thailand. The Meeting provided an opportunity to discuss and exchange views on potential areas of collaboration between SEAFDEC and FAO.

While congratulating *Dr. Belton* on his new position as Senior Fishery Officer, *Ms. Sampan* also highlighted the ongoing collaborative projects with FAO,

including the “Sustainable Management of Fisheries, Marine Living Resources and Their Habitats in the Bay of Bengal Region for the Benefit of Coastal States and Communities (BOBLME Phase II)” Project, the “Promoting the Blue Economy and Strengthening Fisheries Governance of the Gulf of Thailand through the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (GoTFish)” Project, and the Letter of Agreement (LOA) between FAO and SEAFDEC for implementation of “Mixed Stock Fisheries in the Asia Pacific: Identifying key technical limitations and providing practical solutions for management”, as well as subjects on combat IUU fishing, small-scale fisheries, aquaculture, among others. These initiatives contribute to



regional efforts to support Member Countries in the sustainable management of fisheries resources.

She reaffirmed SEAFDEC’s commitment to further advancing collaboration with FAO and emphasized the importance of promoting knowledge exchange and strengthening practical cooperation to deliver tangible benefits to the people and the fisheries sector of the region. ❖

## SEAFDEC Secretary-General pays a courtesy call to the Council Director for the Philippines

The SEAFDEC Secretary-General, *Ms. Sampan Panjarat*, together with the Chief of SEAFDEC/AQD, *Mr. Dan D. Baliao*, paid a courtesy call to the SEAFDEC Council Director for the Philippines, and the Undersecretary for the Fisheries Department of Agriculture, *Ms. Drusila Esther E. Bayate*, and officials of SEAFDEC Secretariat and BFAR, on 6 March 2026.

While congratulating *Ms. Sampan* on her role as SEAFDEC Secretary-General, *Ms. Drusila* expressed her appreciation to SEAFDEC for the strong collaboration and partnership between SEAFDEC and BFAR in promoting sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Southeast Asian region.



emphasized that the regional initiatives undertaken by SEAFDEC to support its Member Countries in several areas of fisheries and aquaculture development. She also informed the upcoming SEAFDEC activities, including the 58<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council, scheduled to be convened in May 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand, and the Regional Workshop on Multispecies

and Multigear Fisheries, which will be organized in June 2026, among other events. The meeting also discussed the support of SEAFDEC/AQD to BFAR in several areas of aquaculture development, particularly in capacity-building activities for BFAR officers.

The courtesy call to the SEAFDEC Council Director for the Philippines was a side activity of SEAFDEC following *Ms. Sampan*’s participation as a PSC member in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Project Steering Committee on Blue Horizon: Ocean Relief through Seaweed Aquaculture, organized on 5–6 March 2026, in Coron, Palawan, the Philippines. ❖

## Fisheries school in Bataan benchmarks freshwater technologies at AQD

To modernize its vocational curriculum, the Bataan School of Fisheries (BSF) conducted benchmarking and capacity-building activities at the SEAFDEC/AQD Binangonan Freshwater Station in Rizal, Philippines on 27 February 2026.

The visit centered on adopting industry-leading standards for the school’s Special Program in Technical and Vocational Education (SPTVE). The faculty and staff participated in

lectures on the breeding and grow-out operations of bighead carp and giant freshwater prawn, species for which the AQD station is recognized.

Station Head *Dr. Frolan Aya* emphasized that these lectures aim to provide Bataan communities with sustainable livelihood alternatives.

To ensure the integration of these practices into the BSF curriculum, the visit included technical demonstrations,



*Demonstration on bighead carp broodstock selection and sex identification*

facility tours, and provision of 200 bighead carp fry for instructional use. ❖

## SEAFDEC and BFAR visit seaweed farming community in Palawan

A team from the Blue Horizon Seaweed Project, comprising representatives from the SEAFDEC and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Philippines, conducted a field visit to seaweed farming sites in Palawan, on 7 March 2026. During the visit, the team met with members of the Calamianes Seaweed Marketing Cooperative and observed their seaweed farming operations. The delegation also toured the cooperative's seaweed drying warehouse and landing facility. One notable feature of the group is the strong participation of women, with the cooperative largely composed of women seaweed farmers who play a key role in the cultivation and post-harvest activities of seaweed production in the area.

The cooperative has received technical and infrastructure support from BFAR, including capacity building on value-added processing, as well as assistance in establishing a seaweed drying warehouse and landing facility. During the visit, members of the



cooperative proudly showcased several value-added products developed through these initiatives, including seaweed salad and other processed seaweed products. These efforts demonstrate the potential of seaweed farming not only as a sustainable livelihood for coastal communities but also as an opportunity to strengthen local value chains and empower women in the seaweed aquaculture sector.

In celebration of International Women's Day, the visit also highlighted the important role of women in seaweed farming communities. At the Calamianes Seaweed Marketing Cooperative in

Palawan, women make up the majority of seaweed farmers and are actively involved in cultivation, post-harvest handling, and the development of value-added products. Their leadership and dedication demonstrate how empowering women in coastal communities not only strengthens household livelihoods but also contributes to the sustainable growth of the seaweed sector.

SEAFDEC and BFAR are implementing the Blue Horizon Seaweed Aquaculture Project, which has selected two pilot sites in the Philippines: Palawan and Zamboanga. The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through WWF-US as the implementing agency. Meanwhile, BFAR Philippines, the Department of Fisheries and Surveillance (DFiS) of Viet Nam, and the SEAFDEC Project Management Unit serve as the executing agencies, working together to create new sustainable seaweed value chains that will deliver ecosystem services and provide socioeconomic benefits in the region. ✦

## AQD launches spiny lobster farming initiative

SEAFDEC/AQD is developing sustainable grow-out farming techniques for the spiny lobster (*Panulirus ornatus*) and evaluate its viability as a livelihood for coastal fishers in the Philippines.

This species is recognized by AQD for its potential to strengthen a high-value industry due to its high market demand and abundant seed resources in the country.

Although spiny lobster farming exists across the Philippine archipelago, it still depends on the collection of pueruli and juveniles from the wild, which are seeded into small-scale nursery and grow-out cages using traditional methods. AQD aims to standardize these practices into science-based production models, including recommendations on optimal stocking density, appropriate feeding scheme, and environmental management

AQD is identifying the best conditions of natural habitats for lobsters in Guimaras, Philippines, through environmental monitoring to study the local ecology and verified catch data through interviews with fishers. The baseline data is essential for evaluating spiny lobster ecosystem dynamics and for guiding future fisheries management and stock assessment efforts.

At AQD's Igang Marine Station in Guimaras, experiments are underway to determine optimal stocking density and feeding practices for nursery and grow-out phases in sea-based cage systems. Growth performance, survival, and socioeconomic analyses are also in progress.

During the nursery phase, puerulus stage (post-larval) lobsters, with an average body weight of 0.35 grams, are reared for six months to reach



*Close-up photo of juvenile spiny lobsters measured during monitoring of culture trials at AQD's Igang Marine Station in Guimaras, Philippines*

approximately 50 grams, which is an ideal size for grow-out following strict husbandry procedures. In the grow-out phase, lobsters reared for 12 months in sea-based systems attain body weights ranging from 500 grams to 1 kilogram, with carapace lengths between 7.9 centimeters and 10.9 centimeters, depending on stocking density.

The project aims to balance economic productivity with environmental

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## AQD launches spiny lobster farming initiative

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sustainability and animal welfare. Monitoring of water salinity, dissolved oxygen, pH, total suspended solids, nutrients, bacterial load, and sediment quality beneath cage facilities are conducted regularly. Temperature and light levels are also continuously logged.

Lobster health assessments are also routinely conducted to prevent or control diseases, enhance survival and health, and manage environmental impacts.

Upon completion of this project, large-scale verification trials of the refined protocols will be conducted, followed by the standardization of rearing protocols and technology transfer to stakeholders. ❖

## AQD joins aquaculture fair in Türkiye



AQD Chief Dan Baliao and Research Division Head Dr. Leobert de la Peña join international delegates during the opening of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aquaculture Fair and 11<sup>th</sup> Aquaculture Workshop in Antalya, Türkiye.

SEAFDEC/AQD Chief Dan Baliao and Research Division Head Dr. Leobert de la Peña participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Aquaculture Fair and 11<sup>th</sup> Aquaculture Workshop on 4–8 February 2026 in Antalya, Türkiye.

The fair featured technical presentations on recirculating aquaculture systems international technology transfer, sustainable feed

production, export financing, artificial intelligence applications, and climate-related health challenges in fishes.

It provided a platform for networking and knowledge exchange, and showcased innovative technologies aimed at strengthening the sustainability and global competitiveness of Türkiye's aquaculture sector. ❖

## Seaweed farmers in Philippine receive seedlings from AQD



A total of 289 seaweed farmers from three fisherfolk associations in Palawan, Philippines, received high-quality seedlings from SEAFDEC/AQD on 19 March 2026.

The farmers are members of the Amogues Fisherfolk Association, Sitio Calumpang Seaweeds Growers Association, and Paulangon Fisherfolk Association. They had previously raised concerns with the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary *Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr.* regarding the declining seaweed production in their area.

To help address this issue, AQD provided 50 kilograms of *Kappaphycus alvarezii* to the associations through the DA–Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Mimaropa.

The seaweed seedlings were produced through tissue culture at the AQD main station in Tigbauan, Iloilo, Philippines. They were derived, through micropropagation, from the youngest and fastest-growing parts of healthy parent plants to ensure high-quality planting materials.

The seaweeds were then hardened in sea-based nurseries to prepare them for field transplantation before being shipped to Palawan. ❖

## AQD stocks prawn, tilapia for polyculture grow-out project

SEAFDEC/AQD stocked 3,000 giant freshwater prawn juveniles and 10,000 Nile tilapia fry in a 1,000 square meter earthen pond in Bingawan, Iloilo, Philippines, on 24 February 2025.

AQD collaborated with the Department of Agriculture – Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Region 6 (DA-BFAR 6) and the local government of Bingawan in the stocking activity.

The giant freshwater prawn juveniles were sourced from the AQD Multi-species Freshwater Hatchery in



Tigbauan, Iloilo; while the tilapia fry were from the DA-BFAR 6 Provincial Agri-Aqua Research and Technology Center in Pototan, Iloilo.

A stocking density of three giant freshwater prawn juveniles and 10 tilapia fry per square meter were observed.

The giant freshwater prawn reaches harvest size after four to five months from an initial average body weight of 1.4 grams upon stocking, while tilapia reaches harvest size after four to six months from an initial average body weight of 1.36 grams upon stocking.

The grow-out culture is part of the polyculture projects of the two priority programs of AQD—the Joint Mission on Accelerated National Techno-Transfer Program and Meeting Social and Economic Challenges in Aquaculture Program. ❖

## AQD backs bill protecting municipal fishers

SEAFDEC/AQD, Chief *Dan Baliao*, expressed support for Senate Bill No. 522, also known as the Municipal Fisherfolk Protection Act, during a hearing at the Philippine Senate on 18 February 2026 in Pasay City, Philippines.



Speaking before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform, Chief *Baliao* said the proposed bill is a “vital legislative shield” for the livelihood of subsistence fishers whom he referred to as “the country’s most vulnerable food producers.”

The Senate bill reinforces the 15-kilometer municipal zone for small-scale fishers and upholds statutory provisions for preferential access of municipal fisherfolk under the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 (Republic Act No. 8550).

While expressing full institutional support for the bill’s objective, the AQD Chief raised concerns on Section 7, which proposes amendments to Section 18 of the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998. The current provision allows small- and medium-scale commercial fishing within the 10–15 kilometer zone in waters not less than seven fathoms (approximately 12.8 meters) deep.

*Baliao* cautioned that such depth remains within ecologically sensitive

areas, where coral reefs and seagrass beds function as vital nursery grounds. He recommended aligning the provision with other scientific proposals such as the Senate Bill No. 432, which sets the threshold at 20 fathoms or 36.5 meters.

Increasing the depth limit to 20 fathoms ensures commercial vessels operate seaward of ecologically sensitive shallow-water areas and do not disrupt the nursery grounds essential within the core municipal fishing zone closer to shore.

On the other hand, the Chief welcomed the requirement of the bill for scientific and technical assessments, along with socioeconomic impact evaluations, prior to authorizing commercial fishing within municipal waters. ✂

## AQD reports breeding breakthroughs at Viet Nam symposium



SEAFDEC/AQD showcased its recent advances in aquaculture breeding at the UK-ASEAN Symposium on Precision Breeding held in Hanoi, Viet Nam, on 11–12 March 2026.

In his talk, “Overview of SEAFDEC/AQD,” Chief *Dan Baliao* highlighted the research center’s mandate to support fisheries development through research, human resource development, and knowledge exchange across the region.

Among the highlights of his talk were breakthroughs in the spawning and closing the life cycle of economically important species in captivity, a major step toward reducing reliance on wild-caught seeds. The Chief reported the first natural spawning of mackerel tuna in the world, and the completion of the round scad life cycle in captivity, both of which were accomplished in 2025.

Chief *Baliao* also cited several landmark achievements in aquaculture achieved in earlier years, including advances in the breeding of milkfish, black tiger shrimp, and rabbitfish.

He also mentioned other notable developments made by AQD such as the production of neo-female giant freshwater prawns, enabling faster-growing male stocks; thermal manipulation techniques to induce milkfish spawning year-round; and development of single-spat oysters through specialized hatchery techniques. ✂



## AQD shares technical inputs on legislative proposals for hatchery projects in Philippine

SEAFDEC/AQD participated in initial deliberations of the Philippine House of Representatives’ Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries on 4 March 2026 in Quezon City.

Chief *Dan Baliao* presented technical input, feasibility assessments, and recommendations to guide discussions on proposed fish hatchery projects.

For House Bill No. 1002, which proposes a multi-species marine hatchery in Carmen, Agusan del Norte, AQD recommended that the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Caraga (DA-BFAR Caraga) and the local government unit finalize project plans, secure legal and environmental clearances, and ensure compliance with infrastructure and water quality standards in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. AQD also advised considering alternative sites if environmental or regulatory issues remain.

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## AQD shares technical inputs on legislative proposals for hatchery projects in Philippine

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For House Bills No. 1791 and 2329, AQD confirmed the viability of the proposed freshwater hatcheries based on submitted feasibility studies. The hatchery in Barotac Viejo, Iloilo, to be established at Northern Iloilo State University, will prioritize tilapia production to address fry shortages, with management transitioning to the university.

Meanwhile, the hatchery in San Miguel, Surigao del Sur, is expected to improve fish production and support local aquaculture development, with continued support from DA-BFAR Caraga and the local government helping ensure its sustainability and community benefits. ❖

## AQD, DA-BFAR 6 collaborate to promote single oyster culture using HDPE baskets

SEAFDEC/AQD commenced a verification study on the use of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) baskets for the grow-out culture of slipper-shaped oyster (*Magallana bilineata*) on 9 January 2026 in Leganes, Iloilo, Philippines.

The HDPE baskets are an alternative to traditionally used culture substrates such as bamboo stakes, worn tires, and old oyster shells. In these conventional methods, oyster larvae naturally attach to these surfaces and form clusters, which limits individual growth.

Meanwhile, the reusable HDPE baskets allow oysters to be grown

separately from individual spat (juvenile oysters), reducing crowding and resulting in single oysters with larger, more uniform sizes that command better prices.

A total of 200 HDPE baskets, each measuring 73 cm × 27 cm x 14 cm, were stocked with oyster spat and placed in a brackishwater pond. The spat, which had an initial shell length of 3.22–4.65 cm and average body weight of 2.61–5.66 grams, were all sourced from SEAFDEC/AQD.

The project is being conducted by SEAFDEC/AQD in collaboration with the Philippine Department of



*Slipper-shaped oyster spat stocked in HDPE baskets during a verification study on grow-out culture conducted by AQD in Leganes, Iloilo, Philippines*

Agriculture – Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Region 6 (DA-BFAR 6) as part of the research center's Joint Mission for Accelerated National Techno-Transfer Program. ❖

## Strengthening inland fisheries management in South Sumatra through multi-stakeholder engagement

In early March 2026, RIIFE and SEAFDEC/IFRDMD in Palembang welcomed a series of visits from local Fisheries Services across South Sumatra. These visits reflected a shared commitment to strengthening collaboration, exchanging knowledge, and advancing sustainable inland fisheries management in the region.

The first visit came from the Fisheries Service of Muara Enim Regency on 5 March 2026. As one of the pilot areas for IFRDMD initiatives, Muara Enim holds a strategic role in ongoing regional projects aimed at improving fishers' livelihoods and strengthening co-management in small-scale fisheries. During the visit, discussions centered on the progress of these initiatives, particularly on efforts to enhance community participation and improve



fisheries data collection. The delegation also explored RIIFE and IFRDMD facilities, including the preserved fish museum and traditional fishing gear gallery, offering a closer look at Indonesia's rich inland fisheries heritage.

The following day, on 6 March 2026, the Fisheries Service of Musi Banyuasin

Regency visited RIIFE and IFRDMD. Known for its vast inland waters, Musi Banyuasin brings significant potential for fisheries development. The visit provided a valuable platform to exchange insights on ecosystem-based fisheries management and explore practical strategies for sustainable

(Continued on page 10)

## Strengthening inland fisheries management in South Sumatra through multi-stakeholder engagement

(Continued from page 9)

utilization. IFRDMD also shared key findings from its 2024 Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) activities, sparking discussions on how such approaches can be adapted locally. Traditional practices, such as the lebak lebung auction system, were also highlighted, alongside lessons learned from other ASEAN Member States.

The series of visits concluded with the arrival of the Fisheries Service

of Banyuasin Regency on 12 March 2026. This visit focused on a specific yet important topic, the conservation of *Datnioides microlepis*, locally known as ikan elang. As a valuable ornamental fish species, its sustainability is increasingly important. Through open and constructive discussions, participants shared perspectives on the current status of the species, challenges in its conservation, and potential strategies to ensure its long-term management.

Together, these visits created a dynamic space for dialogue, learning, and collaboration. They highlighted the important role of RIIFE and IFRDMD as hubs for knowledge exchange and regional cooperation. More importantly, they reinforced a shared vision: to build resilient inland fisheries systems that support both ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.



## IFRDMD contributes to strengthening inland fisheries research at IPB University, Indonesia

SEAFDEC/IFRDMD continued its active role in advancing inland fisheries research and management in Southeast Asia by participating in a Limited Discussion on the *Analysis of Research Needs and Strengths in Freshwater Ecosystems and Inland Fisheries*. The event was held on 6 January 2026 at IPB University.

Representing IFRDMD, the Chief, *Mr. Andi Soesmono*, delivered a presentation entitled “Challenges of Inland Fisheries Research at the Regional Level: Lessons Learned from SEAFDEC/IFRDMD.” The presentation underscored the vital role of inland water bodies, such as rivers, lakes, swamps, and reservoirs, in supporting food security, livelihoods, and ecosystem services across the Southeast Asian region.

Despite the region’s rich freshwater resources, IFRDMD highlighted several pressing challenges facing inland fisheries, including habitat degradation, pollution (notably microplastics), overfishing, and the lack of reliable and harmonized stock assessment data. These issues emphasize the need to



strengthen research integration and promote evidence-based policymaking for sustainable fisheries management at both national and regional levels.

Drawing from its regional experiences, IFRDMD shared key lessons learned from various initiatives, including the development of data collection methodologies, stock assessment approaches, management of anguillid eel resources, and studies on microplastic contamination. Capacity-building programs for ASEAN Member States were also highlighted as essential efforts to support the implementation of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management in inland waters.

The discussion served as an important platform for knowledge exchange among IFRDMD, academic experts from

IPB University, and key stakeholders, including representatives from FAO Indonesia and the National Research and Innovation Agency. Participants discussed research gaps in inland fisheries, mapped existing research strengths, and explored opportunities to enhance collaboration and funding at the regional level.

Participation in this activity reflects IFRDMD’s continued commitment to strengthening regional research networks and fostering collaboration among research institutions, policymakers, and development partners. The outcomes of the discussion are expected to contribute to the development of strategic research agendas for inland fisheries and support initiatives aimed at improving food security, environmental sustainability, and community livelihoods across Southeast Asia.

IFRDMD reaffirms its role as a regional knowledge hub, promoting collaboration among ASEAN Member States to ensure the sustainable utilization and management of inland fisheries resources for present and future generations.



## IFRDMD and RIIFE commemorate Ramadan 2026 with Iftar Gathering and Charity Donation

On 11 March 2026, the Deputy Chief of SEAFDEC/IFRDMD, *Mr. Toru Shimoda*, participated in a Ramadan iftar (breaking of the fast) gathering held together with staff and retired staff of the Research Institute for Inland Fisheries and Extension (RIIFE), IFRDMD personnel, and internship students.

Prior to the maghrib call to prayer, which marked the time to break the fast, several meaningful activities were organized. Donations were provided through the support of Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI), along with contributions collected from employees of RIIFE and IFRDMD. These donations were

distributed to support people in need, reflecting the spirit of sharing and caring for others during the holy month of Ramadan.

The participants also attended a short religious talk delivered by an Islamic

(Continued on page 11)

## IFRDMD and RIIFE commemorate Ramadan 2026 with Iftar Gathering and Charity Donation

(Continued from page 10)



scholar, highlighting the values and significance of fasting, as well as the importance of compassion, gratitude, and solidarity with others.

The gathering was conducted in a warm and friendly atmosphere, fostering

closer relationships among staff, interns, and guests. The event also served as an opportunity to strengthen camaraderie and reinforce the spirit of togetherness within IFRDMD and its partners in celebrating Ramadan. ❖

## MFRDMD leads Technical Workshop on Data Verification on Marine Debris and ALDFG

The Technical Workshop on Data Verification and Validation of Marine Debris and ALDFG Questionnaire Feedback from Fishers was organized on 12–13 January 2026 in Bidong View Resort, Setiu, Terengganu, Malaysia. Eight staff members from SEAFDEC/MFRDMD participated, together with *Dr. Abdullah Mohamad* from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT).



The workshop was conducted to strengthen the accuracy of the results, following the successful completion of the survey to gather information for estimating the amount of abandoned,

lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) at pilot sites in Malaysia last year. The next crucial step is the analysis of the data collected during the workshop to ensure its consistency, validity, and integrity.

The focus of the workshop was to provide practical guidance on data cleaning, verification, and validation using SPSS software. The resource person provided hands-on training to participants, enhancing their technical capacity in managing and analyzing survey data. This workshop not only improved the reliability of the dataset but also built confidence among the team in applying statistical tools for fisheries-related research. The verified and validated data serve as a strong foundation for estimating ALDFG at pilot sites in Malaysia. ❖

## SEAFDEC Secretary-General welcomes JICA delegation at TD

On 27 March 2026, the SEAFDEC Secretary-General, *Ms. Sampan Panjarat*, together with the Deputy Secretary-General, *Mr. Koichi Tahara*, and senior officials from the Training Department and Secretariat, warmly welcomed the representatives of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) at SEAFDEC/TD.

While expressing her appreciation to JICA for its continued support, *Ms. Sampan* emphasized the importance of the partnership between the two

organizations and highlighted their shared commitment to advancing sustainable fisheries management and strengthening food security in Southeast Asia.

The discussions focused on ongoing collaborative initiatives under ASEAN cooperation, including the ASEAN-JICA Food Value Chain Development Project and the ASEAN-JICA Capacity Building Project on IUU Fishing Countermeasures in Southeast Asia. During the Mission, the JICA representatives toured SEAFDEC/



TD facilities, including the research vessel M.V. SEAFDEC, to observe the technical capacity that supports regional fisheries development. ❖

## KMITL students explore sustainable fisheries at TD



On 6 March 2026, the SEAFDEC/TD welcomed 50 university students from

King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL) for an educational site visit. The program began with a comprehensive overview of SEAFDEC's mission to promote sustainable fisheries and food security across Southeast Asia. A core focus of the session was an expert-led lecture on combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which provided students

with critical insights into the regional policies and technological monitoring systems essential for protecting marine ecosystems and ensuring ethical fishing practices.

To gain practical experience, the students were invited to explore the M.V. SEAFDEC research vessel. During the tour, the KMITL group learned about the

(Continued on page 12)

## KMITL students explore sustainable fisheries at TD

(Continued from page 11)



various specialized tools and equipment used for marine resource surveys. They also had the unique opportunity to study the ship's purse seine fishing gear, seeing firsthand how large-scale fishing technology is operated at sea. This visit allowed them to see how their technical studies can be applied to real-world marine conservation in the future.



## TD participates in IMCS Network General Membership Meeting

*Mr. Kongpathai Saraphaivanich*, the Training and Research Supporting Division Head of the SEAFDEC/TD, participated in the IMCS Network General Membership Meeting held virtually on 13 January 2026. The meeting provided a vital platform for members to reconnect, exchange innovative ideas, and collaborate on the Network's future strategic direction. Key highlights included progress updates on major work streams and discussions on strengthening governance to ensure the Network's continued growth and operational effectiveness.

SEAFDEC officially joined the International Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (IMCS) Network in early 2023, a milestone formally recognized



during the 55<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council in May 2023. This partnership significantly bolsters SEAFDEC's capacity to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by enhancing global information sharing, providing access to specialized technical training, and fostering deeper regional cooperation in fisheries enforcement.



## Chulalongkorn University science students visit TD to explore international fisheries cooperation and research vessel operation



On 18 March 2026, the delegation of 16 students from the Faculty of Science, Chulalongkorn University, visited the SEAFDEC/TD. The primary objective of this study visit was to provide students

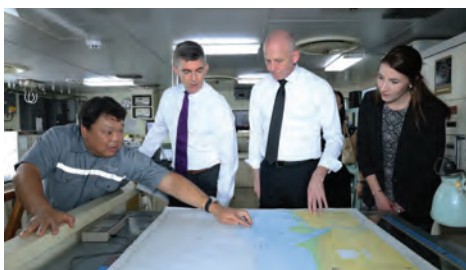
with a comprehensive understanding of how an international organization operates within the fisheries sector. The visit provided students with an insight into SEAFDEC's organizational

framework and its vital role in promoting sustainable fisheries across the region.

In addition, the students explored the technical aspects of maritime navigation and the overview of the M.V. SEAFDEC and its essential role in supporting fisheries research. This experience exposure aimed to bridge the gap between classroom theory and practical observation, equipping the next generation of scientists with insights into modern maritime and fisheries sciences.



## TD welcomes U.S. Embassy Bangkok's RSA team to strengthen regional fisheries collaboration



On 19 February 2026, the SEAFDEC /TD welcomed a delegation of four representatives from the Regional Strategic Assistance (RSA) Section of the U.S. Embassy Bangkok. During the visit, the delegation toured TD's specialized facilities including the M.V. SEAFDEC

research vessel, the Fishing Workshop, and the Marine Engineering Workshop to observe the Department's technical capacity in support of regional fisheries development. This visit provided a productive opportunity for both teams to review their ongoing workplan and discuss key deliverables under their collaborative project, ensuring that all joint efforts remain effective and well-coordinated.

Beyond the technical updates, the engagement aimed to bolster the partnership and ensure full alignment



on shared objectives for sustainable fisheries. This collaborative session reinforced the commitment of both SEAFDEC and the U.S. Embassy to working closely together, streamlining their efforts toward a prosperous and well-managed marine sector in the region.



## TD participates and presents on Combating IUU Fishing at BOBP-IGO Workshop

Five staff members from the SEAFDEC/TD, who are actively involved in conducting and implementing projects to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, participated in the webinar “Understanding Global Experience in Regional Cooperation to Curb IUU Fishing” on 23 March 2026. The event was organized by the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organization (BOBP-IGO).

During the session, *Mr. Kongpathai Saraphaivanich*, the Training and



Research Supporting Division Head, served as a representative to present on “Regional Technical Organization Facilitating Capacity Building and Collaboration.” His presentation highlighted SEAFDEC’s implementation

activities and its ongoing support for ASEAN Member States (AMSS) in combating IUU fishing within the region.

This webinar was conducted as part of the “Sustainable Management of Fisheries, Marine Living Resources and their Habitats in the Bay of Bengal Region for the Benefit of Coastal States and Communities (BOBLME Phase II)” project. The project is currently being implemented by BOBP-IGO across participating countries in South Asia.



## Myanmar delegation evaluates seaworthiness of M.V. SEAFDEC at TD

On 9 February 2026, the SEAFDEC/TD welcomed a five-member delegation from Myanmar. The delegation comprised representatives from the Research and Development Division, the Department of Marine Administration, Myanmar Maritime University, and the Tanintharyi Fisheries Federation. The visit primarily aimed to inspect the seaworthiness of the M.V. SEAFDEC as part of a collaborative framework for vessel transfer or utilization. The day commenced with a warm welcome from the Training Department Chief and the Deputy Training Department

Chief, followed by a comprehensive technical briefing by the Captain of M.V. SEAFDEC on the vessel’s specifications and operational history.

In the afternoon, the delegates conducted a thorough on-site inspection of the vessel, examining operational areas including the navigation bridge, engine room, crew accommodations, and specialized deck equipment to ensure all systems meet maritime standards. Following the inspection, the selection framework for the recipient was presented, leading to a productive



discussion on technical cooperation. The visit concluded with a shared vision to enhance regional fisheries management, highlighted by the closing remarks from both the Myanmar Head of Delegation and SEAFDEC.



## SEAFDEC joins solar cell training program to enhance renewable energy capacity



Two staff members from the SEAFDEC/TD participated in the “Solar Cell Installation and Maintenance (SCI10)” training program, held from 25 to 27 March 2026, in Bangkok and Pathum Thani Province, Thailand. This event was organized by the Institute for Future Workforce Development, National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), in collaboration with the Alternative Energy Institute of Thailand Foundation.

*Mr. Thaweesak Thimkrap* and *Mr. Khunthawat Manomayidthikarn*, from the Marine Engineering Section, Training and Research Supporting Division, joined the program to enhance their technical knowledge and practical skills in solar photovoltaic (PV) systems. This participation reflects SEAFDEC’s commitment to promoting sustainable energy solutions and strengthening capacity in environmentally friendly technologies.

The course covered key topics such as safety requirements, system components, installation standards, and maintenance of solar PV systems. The two SEAFDEC staff members also received hands-on training in solar panel installation, system inspection, grounding techniques, and troubleshooting.

By attending this training, the SEAFDEC representatives aim to apply the acquired knowledge to support energy-efficient operations and sustainable practices within the fisheries sector. The initiative aligns with broader regional efforts to reduce environmental impacts and promote renewable energy adoption.



## Seminar on International Women's Day "Give to Gain for Gender Equality in Fisheries in Thailand"



On 5 March 2026, the SEAFDEC/TD, in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries (DOF) Thailand, organized a seminar entitled "Give to Gain for Gender Equality in Fisheries in Thailand" in celebration of International Women's Day 2026. The event aimed to promote awareness of gender equality and support the roles of women in the fisheries sector of Thailand.

The activity was conducted under the main theme of International's Day 2026, "Give to Gain," which emphasizes sharing, generosity, and collaboration to sustainably advance gender equality. This was achieved through the exchange of experiences, good practices, and lessons learned in integrating gender dimensions into the fisheries sector.

In addition, an exhibition was organized during the event to showcase initiatives and activities reflecting the spirit of "giving" to create opportunities and promote gender equality in fisheries. This also strengthened the organizational image in implementing socially responsible approaches alongside the sustainable development of fisheries resources.

This event was attended by participants from various national, regional, and international organizations, including the DOF Thailand, Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development (DWF), Mahidol University, Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), and SEAFDEC.

It marks another important step in supporting the equal participation of women and men in the fisheries sector and aligns with the policies of Thailand and SEAFDEC to promote gender equality for sustainable development.



## TD and DOF Thailand explore alternative tracking devices for small-scale fishing vessels to enhance fisheries monitoring in Thailand

The Marine Engineering Section of SEAFDEC/TD, in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries (DOF) Thailand, organized a technical meeting on 9 March 2026 at the Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC), DOF headquarters in Bangkok. Co-chaired by TD and *Mr. Aekkarat Wongkeaw*, Senior Fisheries Specialist from the DOF, the meeting focused on a presentation by *Thaicom Public Company Limited* regarding innovative fishing vessel tracking devices. The session aimed to evaluate the specifications, durability, and cost-effectiveness of these devices, as well as to gather information on their limitations and monthly service fees.



This initiative is part of the 'Alternative Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) for Commercial Small-scale Fishing Vessels in Thailand' project.

The data collected will be compiled into a comprehensive comparative study report to provide a basis for informed decision-making by the DOF

Thailand in selecting the most efficient tracking technology. This initiative reflects the Department of Fisheries' strong commitment to upgrading its monitoring systems, particularly for the small-scale fishing sector. By identifying high-quality and cost-effective devices, TD and the DOF aim to strengthen fisheries surveillance capabilities and promote sustainable resource management. Ultimately, this project reinforces Thailand's ongoing strategic efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing through advanced technological integration.



## TD attends Progress Report Meeting on the Development of Marine Habitats for Fisheries Using Decommissioned Oil and Gas Platform Structures Collaborative Project

On 9 February 2026, the SEAFDEC/TD participated in the Progress Report Meeting on the Development of Marine Habitats for Fisheries Using Decommissioned Oil and Gas Platform Structures Collaborative Project. The meeting was organized by the Department of Fisheries (DOF), Thailand.

TD was represented by *Ms. Panitnard Weerawat*, Research and

Development Division Head, and *Mr. Sukchai Arnupapboon*, Fishing Ground and Oceanography Section Head. As one of the collaborating agencies of the project, TD, in partnership with Kasetsart University, provided technical support for model investigations on the impacts of Artificial Reef structures from decommissioned oil and gas wellhead platform jackets on water level, flow velocity and water circulation. TD



also deployed the research vessel M.V. SEAFDEC to conduct surveys of fisheries  
(Continued on page 15)

## TD attends Progress Report Meeting on the Development of Marine Habitats for Fisheries Using Decommissioned Oil and Gas Platform Structures Collaborative-Project

(Continued from page 14)

resources and the marine environment in the rig-to-reef deployment area off the coast of Pattani Province.

Currently, the project is in the process of obtaining the required permits to deploy a decommissioned oil and gas wellhead platform jacket as an artificial reef in the designated area. Following the installation of the platform jacket, post-

deployment surveys will be conducted to assess the project's effectiveness. These surveys are scheduled to be carried out three times between 2027 and 2028.

The Development of Marine Habitats for Fisheries Using Decommissioned Oil and Gas Platform Structures Collaborative Project is expected to enhance marine biodiversity, improve

fisheries resources and promote sustainable fisheries management through the effective utilization of decommissioned oil and gas platform structures. TD remains committed to supporting the planned surveys and contributing to science-based evaluation to ensure the long-term sustainability of marine resources in Thailand. ❖

## TD joins RTM on Marine Debris, ALDFG in Southeast Asian Region

Two Fishing Gear Technologists from the SEAFDEC/TD participated in the “Regional Technical Meeting on Marine Debris, Abandoned, Lost or Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) in Southeast Asian Region” organized by SEAFDEC Marine Fishery Resources Development and Management Department (MFRDMD) from 21 to 23 January 2026 at Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

During the meeting, TD staff delivered two presentations entitled “Information

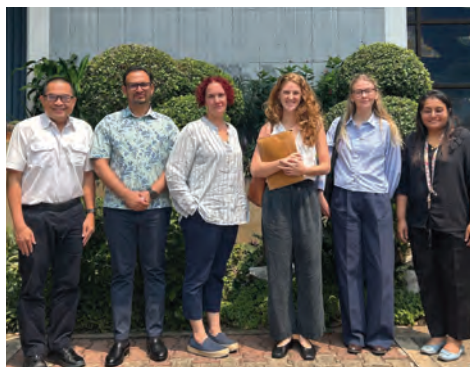
Gathering to Estimate the Amount of ALDFG at Pilot Sites (Thailand)” by *Mr. Santiphong Putsa* and “Development of Methods on Marking of Fishing Gears and Promotion on Marking of Fishing Gears” by *Mr. Nakaret Yasuk*.

The meeting aimed to share the status, experiences, policies, and ongoing initiatives related to marine debris and ALDFG among ASEAN Member States; discuss and develop draft regional technical guideline for ALDFG management and countermeasures in



Southeast Asia; and strengthen regional cooperation and partnerships to reduce marine debris and support sustainable fishery management. ❖

## ILO visits SEAFDEC to exchange information on the implementation of the BOBLME II Project



On 12 March 2026, representatives from the International Labour Organization (ILO), led by *Linnéa Strand* and accompanied by *Dallakoti Gunjan*, *Hanson Valkyriea*, and *Milliken Mattie*, visited SEAFDEC. The Secretary-General of SEAFDEC assigned *Mr. Isara Chanrachakig* and *Ms. Suwanee Sayan* from the Project Planning and Management Division of SEAFDEC/TD to represent SEAFDEC in exchanging information on the implementation of the BOBLME II Project in collaboration with the Bay of Bengal Programme

Inter-Governmental Organization (BOBP-IGO) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). A total of six participants attended the meeting. Under the project arrangement, SEAFDEC oversees activities in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, while BOBP-IGO manages implementation in Bangladesh, India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka.

The discussion highlighted key project priorities, including promoting the ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM), addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, improving port management and fishing gear marking to reduce marine pollution, and enhancing the resilience of coastal communities to climate change. The meeting also emphasized the role of technological innovation and capacity building, such as introducing mechanical hauling devices to reduce labor demands on fishing

vessels and promoting solar-powered ice preservation, alongside training programs organized by SEAFDEC to strengthen the capacity of fisheries stakeholders in the region.

During the discussions, it was noted that while issues such as human trafficking and forced labor remain important concerns in the region, labor inspections and human rights enforcement fall under the jurisdiction of national governments and relevant organizations. Therefore, activities under TD focus on technical cooperation and appropriate technologies to support sustainable fisheries operations, improve livelihoods and safety at sea for fishers. In addition, with the recent expansion of maritime zones in Bangladesh, future activities will also support capacity building for deep-sea tuna fishing and maritime safety in the region. ❖

# SPECIAL REPORT

## JAIF Marine Debris Project Makes Strides in the Fight Against ALDFG

By Mazalina Ali, Mohammad Faisal Md Saleh, Muhammad Amirullah Al Amin Ayob, Hamizah Nadia Alias @ Yusof, and Khairiah Jaafar

SEAFDEC Marine Fishery Resources Development and Management Department



Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) is one of the most persistent and harmful forms of marine litter worldwide. Defined by the FAO as fishing gear that has been abandoned, inadvertently lost, or intentionally discarded (Macfadyen *et al.*, 2009), ALDFG poses serious threats to marine ecosystems, fisheries resources, coastal livelihoods, and navigation safety. Made up mostly of nylon and polyethylene, they can persist for decades and continue to entangle marine fauna and damage habitats in a phenomenon called ghost fishing.

Through the Project “Regional Collaborative Research and Capacity Building for Monitoring and Reduction of Marine Debris from Fisheries in Southeast Asia” implemented at project site in Malaysia by SEAFDEC/MFRDMD, a survey was conducted across 25 coastal districts in Peninsular Malaysia from July to September 2025, where a total of 759 local fishers were interviewed using a questionnaire. About 69 % reported experiencing gear loss, often losing entire sets of gear. The main causes of gear loss varied by fishing method, with trawlers and drift netters citing net snapping and bad

weather conditions, while trap fishers noted accidents with other fishing gear, strong currents, and theft. The economic impacts are significant, with trawl operators spending over RM10,000 to replace lost gear; trap and drift net fishers also experienced financial losses.

Awareness of ALDFG was moderate among fishers. About 61 % were aware of the issue, and 62 % considered ALDFG a serious problem. Fishers noted that ALDFG has been increasing over time and is likely to continue. The most affected resources identified were fish, shrimp/crabs, coral reefs, and turtles.

To study ALDFG distribution and its impacts, MFRDMD conducted monitoring surveys at artificial reef structures along the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The survey covered 12 pilot sites in Terengganu and Pahang using SCUBA diving and supported by photo and video documentation. The activity aimed to gather data on the type, volume and condition of ALDFG and come up with removal guidelines.

The results showed that most sites had low to moderate ALDFG severity with a coverage rate of less than 10 percent. A clear correlation was observed between local regulations and ALDFG severity: sites within marine protected areas had lower severity scores, while sites in active fishing grounds had higher scores. It was observed that the entanglement found on the reef structures were largely degraded and does not pose a severe threat to mobile organisms. However, abandoned fish pots remain a threat, as they significantly contribute to ghost fishing.

Field surveys conducted between December 2025 and January 2026 in Terengganu and Kelantan waters, covering ten trips with different gear types, showed the prevalence of



Pilot sites in Terengganu and Pahang waters

ALDFG and revealed that offshore areas are hotspots for heavy fishing gear accumulation.

Based on the results, a structured framework for ADLFG management and removal was developed to support ASEAN Member States (AMSs), which includes pre-survey activities, data collection, retrieval assessments, stakeholder coordination, retrieval operations, and post-removal management.



*Fish trap caught together with marine catch (left); Discarded trawl net recorded from fishing operation (right)*

To conduct the assessments, AMSs may use the proposed ALDFG severity index, which is based on the intensity of the entanglement, quantity, and environmental impact. After detection and scoring, AMSs can evaluate how to tackle ALDFG, whether to do a full or partial retrieval or to leave the gear in situ to avoid further damage to the site. This ensures that the best course of action taken is the most ecologically sound and logistically feasible.

Coordination is essential to ensure ALDFG retrieval is safe, efficient and compliant. AMSs must notify stakeholders such as the fisheries department, local authorities and communities, as well as maritime agencies. Removal methods depend on water depth, gear type, and available resources.

Planning the retrieval involves selecting from a range of methods such as manual driving, ROVs and mechanical retrieval based on ALDFG condition and budget. Successful operations depend on specialized cutting and lifting tools, sea-to-land logistics, and skilled personnel. A safety plan and emergency protocols must be in place to protect the team

RETRIEVAL DECISIONS FOR ABANDONED, LOST, OR OTHERWISE DISCARDED FISHING GEAR (ALDFG)		
GUIDELINES FOR ALDFG RETRIEVAL DECISIONS		
<b>1. FULL RETRIEVAL</b>  Full Retrieval	<b>DERELICT GEAR MASS, NOT ATTACHED</b>  ALDFG FULLY SEPARATED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ALDFG fully separated</li> <li>Minimal risk to marine life</li> </ul>
<b>2. PARTIAL RETRIEVAL</b>  Partial Retrieval	<b>ALDFG INTERTWINED WITH REEF</b>  ALDFG INTERTWINED WITH REEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partial merger with coral</li> <li>Balances net removal with life protection</li> </ul>
<b>3. NO RETRIEVAL</b>  Abandon	<b>ALDFG COMPLETELY OVERGROWN</b>  ALDFG COMPLETELY OVERGROWN BY ECOSYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gear mainly merged with coral</li> <li>Significant ecological damage to retrieve</li> </ul>

*ALDFG condition and retrieval decision*

and to ensure that the debris is recovered without further environmental damage.

Post-retrieval management is a triage process that decides the fate of recovered gear. Clean gear is recycled or repurposed; contaminated gear is sent to landfills or incineration plants. This ensures optimum resource recyclability and efficient waste management.

While most AMSs have tackled the issue of general marine litter, there is a notable gap in studies or that specifically address ALDFG. In response, MFRDMD has led efforts to develop the Technical Guidelines, which was formulated using a collaborative and evidence-based process. The Guidelines, which are voluntary in nature, are organized into three core pillars: assessment, prevention, and removal. They are informed by two questionnaire assessments, expert consultations, regional and international research, and regional workshops. Key events conducted included the Regional Technical Meeting held in Seremban, Malaysia in January 2026 and the Regional Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand in March 2026.



*Participants of the Regional Workshop on the Development of Technical Guidelines to Assess, Prevent and Remove ALDFG in the Southeast Asian Region conducted on 31 March 2026, Bangkok, Thailand*

The Guidelines aim to enhance regional cooperation while allowing flexibility to align with each country's priorities and institutional capacities. Successful implementation will depend on robust coordination and stakeholder participation. As such AMSs are encouraged to adopt these frameworks, which are in the final stages of revision and refinement.

To strengthen long-term strategies to reduce ALDFG and promote sustainable fisheries management in the region, SEAFDEC proposes the following: 1) establishing a harmonized ALDFG database and reporting system; 2) standardizing data collection protocols; and 3) adopting a gear-based monitoring approach.

The project was funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) with support from the Department of Fisheries (DOF) Malaysia and the Fisheries Development Authority (LKIM Malaysia).



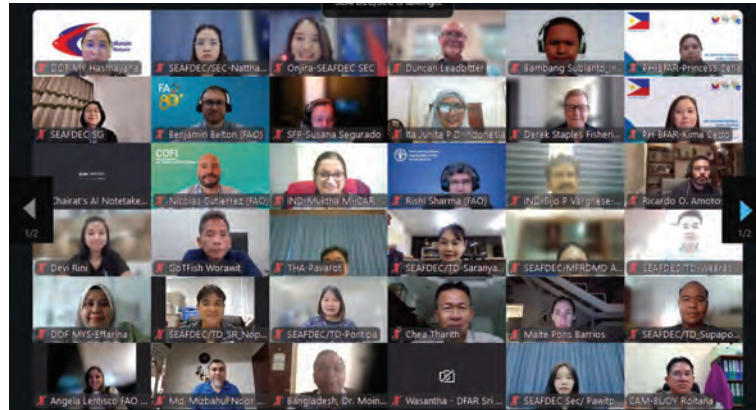
# REGIONAL PROGRAMS

## SEAFDEC and FAO convenes Pre-workshop Webinar on MSMG Fisheries Management

A half-day pre-workshop webinar on challenges and practical solutions for multispecies/multigear (MSMG) fisheries management was co-hosted by SEAFDEC and FAO on 17 March 2026. The Webinar was attended by participants representing countries from Southeast Asia and South Asia, Representatives from FAO, BOBP-IGO, and SEAFDEC.

The Webinar was organized by SEAFDEC with technical assistance from FAO as part of a regional effort to strengthen sustainable fisheries management in the Asia-Pacific region. It also served as a preparatory activity for the upcoming Regional Workshop scheduled for June 2026.

During the Webinar, the topics covered included an overview, challenges, and approaches of assessing and managing multispecies/multigear (MSMG) fisheries in a global context, as well as

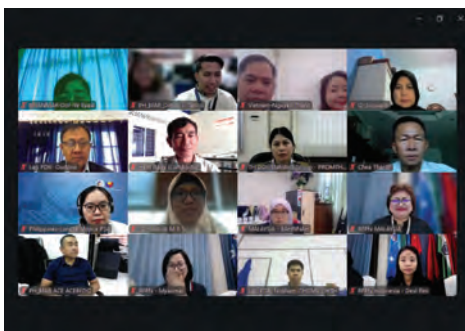


discussions on evaluating management trade-offs in multispecies systems using a tool developed by Amoroso *et al.* The Webinar also provides an opportunity for participants to share initial feedback and perspectives, which will contribute to further refining practical management approaches and discussions for the upcoming Regional Workshop in June 2026, in Bangkok, Thailand.

The Webinar is part of the activities of the collaborative initiatives between

SEAFDEC and FAO on the Project “Mixed Stock Fisheries in the Asia Pacific: Identifying key technical limitations and providing practical solutions for management”. The Project aims to enhance understanding of the trade-offs between societal objectives and multispecies yield, and to facilitate a regional workshop aimed at strengthening multispecies management approaches in the Asia-Pacific region. ❖

## SEAFDEC organizes Online Meeting on Data Submission for SEAFDEC Fishery Statistical Database



The SEAFDEC Secretariat organized the “Online Meeting on Data Submission for SEAFDEC Fishery Statistical Database” on 16 March 2026. The Meeting was attended by the Members of the ASEAN Network on Fishery Statistics and delegates from ASEAN Member States (AMSs), namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, and Viet Nam, via an online platform, except for Thailand, whose representatives attended in person.



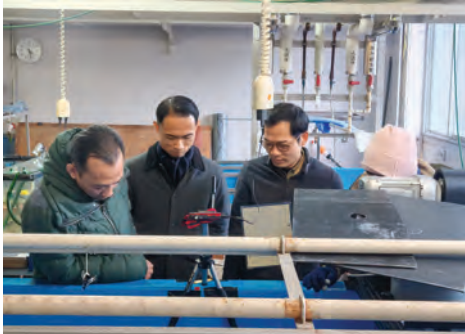
The Meeting was also attended by the SEAFDEC Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, senior officials and information-related officers from the SEAFDEC Secretariat, and the Regional Fisheries Policy Network (RFPN).

The Meeting discussed challenges faced by AMSs in reporting fishery statistics under the new Statistics Framework (2024 Edition), particularly in completing the twenty-two (22) statistical questionnaires and interpreting

certain requirements. In response to these challenges, the Meeting agreed on the revised questionnaires to enhance clarity and facilitate more accurate reporting. Upon approval of the SEAFDEC Council, the revised questionnaires will be applied for the compilation of fishery statistics from the AMSs.

Moreover, the draft version of the new Fishery Statistical Database was presented at the Meeting for comments and feedback. Designed to be more user-friendly, featuring enhanced functionalities, including the generation of tabulations through various query options, the new Statistical Database is scheduled to be officially launched at the 58<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council in May 2026. The outcomes of the Meeting are expected to contribute significantly to ensuring its operational readiness. ❖

## SEAFDEC mission to Japan strengthens collaboration on tropical anguillid eel resource management



From 13 to 16 January 2026, SEAFDEC, led by *Mr. Toru Shimoda*, Deputy Chief of SEAFDEC/IFRDMD, and *Mr. Fumiya Takahashi*, Senior Expert and Assistant Project Manager for the Japanese Trust Fund Programs of the SEAFDEC Secretariat and JAIF-Eel Project Manager, conducted a series of technical visits and consultation meetings in Japan under the JAIF Eel Project to validate and strengthen

stock assessment methods for tropical anguillid eels in Southeast Asia.

During the mission, SEAFDEC visited the Isshiki Eel Farmers Cooperative Society and the Hamanako Eel Farming Production Association to learn about Japan's eel farming practices and resource management approaches, including production management, processing operations, sex selection techniques, and restocking initiatives.

SEAFDEC also held a discussion meeting with the Fisheries Agency of Japan and the Fishery Research and Education Agency to exchange scientific and management perspectives and receive expert recommendations to strengthen the regional applicability of the developed methodologies.

In addition, SEAFDEC held technical consultations with *Prof. Dr. Toshihide Kitakado* of the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology, resource person for the JAIF Eel Project; and visited the Institute of Freshwater Biology, Nagano University, to discuss ongoing research and observe facilities related to eel ecology and resource management.

Overall, the mission provided an important opportunity for SEAFDEC to strengthen collaboration with Japanese partners, exchange technical knowledge, and enhance the scientific rigor of the JAIF Eel Project outputs toward sustainable management of tropical anguillid eel resources in the region.



## 2025 AQD meeting evaluates Japanese Trust Fund-supported projects



Scientists, study leaders, evaluators, and partner institutions gathered for the 2025 Annual Progress Meeting of SEAFDEC/AQD studies funded by the Japanese Trust Fund (JTF) on 17 March 2026 in Tigbauan, Iloilo, Philippines.

The event reviewed projects of the program "Promotion of aquaculture technologies for emerging species through Good Aquaculture Practices (GAqP) in Southeast Asia" under the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Consultative Group Mechanism.

In his opening remarks, AQD Chief *Dan Baliao* highlighted the research center's focus on emerging species, calling it "deeply strategic." He said the aquaculture sector cannot rely solely on a few 'superstar' commodities which, while productive, carry vulnerabilities that can threaten food systems.

The strategy has already produced notable results. Just last year, AQD achieved the first natural captive spawning of mackerel tuna and the completion of the life cycle of round scad in captivity.

The AQD Chief also praised the JTF for its ongoing support of innovative research and capacity-building initiatives that strengthen regional aquaculture.

Projects reviewed included kawakawa full-life cycle culture, shortfin scad production, feeding strategies for tropical anguillid eel, and slipper lobster seed production. The meeting also assessed initiatives to improve oyster and seaweed production under GAqP, as well as training programs to enhance technical capacity.

Evaluators from Japan and the Philippines reviewed each project's relevance, efficiency, and sustainability. Representatives from the SEAFDEC Secretariat and the Fisheries Agency of Japan were also present during the meeting.



## Regional Technical Consultation and Analysis Workshop on Pelagic Fisheries Management

SEAFDEC/MFRDMD convened the Regional Technical Consultation (RTC) on Conservation Efforts and Management Strategies of Pelagic Fisheries Resources from 6–8 January 2026 in Port Dickson,

Malaysia. This final RTC under the Fishing Capacity Project, supported by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), brought together 41 participants, including representatives from eight

ASEAN Member States (AMSs), Fisheries Research Institutes, SEAFDEC Secretariat, and a resource person from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT).

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## Regional Technical Consultation and Analysis Workshop on Pelagic Fisheries Management

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The RTC featured presentations of AMS feedback on the regional questionnaire, success stories such as artificial reef deployment, community-based co-management, fisheries management plans, closed seasons, and catch limits. These exchanges fostered knowledge sharing and culminated in Regional Recommendations for the Future Direction of Pelagic Fisheries.

Following the RTC, MFRDMD organized the Workshop on the Assessment of Conservation Efforts and Management Strategies of Pelagic Fisheries Resources in Southeast Asia on 3–4 February 2026 in Kota Bharu, Malaysia. Participants from DOF



Representative from SEAFDEC Secretariat, and DOF Malaysia

Malaysia, Fisheries Research Institutes, UMT, and MFRDMD reviewed and analyzed compiled feedback from AMSs. A draft report summarizing the findings was presented and will be circulated to AMSs prior to publication.

Both activities were conducted under the project Implementation and Assessment of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity (2024–2026), with support from JAIF. ✦

## MFRDMD spearheads Regional Technical Meeting on Marine Debris and ALDFG

SEAFDEC/MFRDMD convened the Regional Technical Meeting (RTM) on Marine Debris and Abandoned, Lost or Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) from 21 to 23 January 2026 in Seremban, Malaysia, under Activity 1.2 of the Marine Debris Project funded by the Japan–ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). The meeting brought together representatives from eight ASEAN Member States (AMSs), the Fisheries Research Institute, a resource person from Universiti Malaya (UM), the SEAFDEC Secretariat, Training Department, and MFRDMD. The event was also attended by *Mr. Yosuke Kawamoto*, First Secretary of the Mission of Japan to ASEAN, as well as officials from the ASEAN Secretariat.



AMS representatives presented national assessments on marine debris and ALDFG, while staff from TD and MFRDMD presented about the progress on project activities (1.1.1, 1.1.2, 2.2, and 4.1). The meeting reinforced regional commitment to address marine debris through knowledge sharing, capacity building, and guideline development, and concluded with the first draft of the Technical Guidelines to Assess, Prevent,

and Remove ALDFG in the Southeast Asian Region.

Following the RTM, MFRDMD organized an Internal Meeting on the Preparation of Technical Guidelines on 11–12 February 2026 in MFRDMD office at Kuala Terengganu. The meeting reviewed and refined the first draft with contributions from the resource person and the SEAFDEC Secretariat. Inputs received during hybrid discussions were incorporated into the revised version, ensuring a strong foundation for regional adoption. In addition, a new set of questionnaires titled Preventive Measures on Marine Debris and ALDFG was developed for dissemination to AMSs. ✦

## TD and DOF Thailand conduct pilot testing of fishing gear marking to support sustainable fisheries management and reduce ALDFG in Thailand



SEAFDEC/TD, in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries (DOF), Thailand, implemented a series of activities to pilot test and verify

fishing gear marking methods aimed at supporting sustainable fisheries management and reducing Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) in Thailand.

The initiative commenced with the launch of the “Pilot Testing of Gear Marking in Support of Sustainable Fisheries Management and ALDFG Reduction in Chumphon Province, Thailand” on 15 January 2026. The opening ceremony was presided over by

*Mr. Koichi Tahara*, Deputy Secretary-General and Deputy Chief of TD, and hosted by *Ms. Jinda Phetkarnert*, Director of the Chumphon Marine Fisheries Research and Development Center. The activity was conducted under the project “Regional Collaborative Research and Capacity Building for Monitoring and Reduction of Marine Debris from Fisheries in Southeast Asia,” with financial support from the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF).

(Continued on page 21)

## TD and DOF Thailand conduct pilot testing of fishing gear marking to support sustainable fisheries

(Continued from page 20)



The pilot testing, carried out from 15 to 16 January 2026, involved technical staff from TD and officers from the Chumphon Marine Fisheries Research and Development Center. The activity aimed to evaluate the suitability, durability, and practicality of various gear marking materials and methods for collapsible crab traps and gill nets commonly used in small-scale fisheries. A total of 40 small-scale fishers participated, including 20 using collapsible crab traps and 20 operating crab gillnets. Participants also received awareness-raising sessions on the impacts of abandoned, lost or otherwise

discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and were introduced to the importance of gear marking as a preventive measure to reduce gear loss and enhance responsible fisheries practices.

Building on the pilot testing, TD and DOF Thailand convened the “National Meeting for Verifying the Results of the Pilot Testing of Fishing Gear Marking” on 12 March 2026 at Maejo University – Lamae Campus, Chumphon Province. The meeting gathered 41 participants, including fisheries officers, stakeholders, and local fishers, to assess the field performance of different marking materials such as bird rings, plastic tags, and metal tags.

The evaluation focused on key aspects, including practicality in daily fishing operations, cost-effectiveness, durability in marine environments,

and community acceptance. Based on the findings, participants developed practical recommendations for marking collapsible crab traps and crab gillnets, drawing from the direct experiences of local fishers.

This initiative contributes to addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and reducing ALDFG by improving the traceability and accountability of fishing gear. The results are expected to support the development of national and regional manuals on fishing gear marking, aligning with international guidelines while adapting to local contexts. Overall, the activities represent a significant step toward promoting sustainable fisheries management and strengthening community-based approaches to marine resource conservation in the region.



## Study visit on community-based management and sustainable livelihoods at Ban Tha Din Daeng

On 15 February 2026, the SEAFDEC/ TD, in collaboration with the Phuket Marine Fisheries Research and Development Center, organized a study visit for community representatives from Koh Panyee, Phang Nga Province, Thailand, to the Ban Tha Din Daeng Model Community in Ban Tha Din Daeng. A total of 20 participants attended the activity.

The study visit aimed to strengthen community capacity in sustainable fisheries management and community-based tourism development. Participants learned about successful practices in natural resource conservation, mangrove ecosystem management, traditional

small-scale fisheries, and value-added local products. The program included knowledge-sharing sessions, interactive discussions, kayaking through mangrove forests, observation of traditional fishing methods, tin panning, and a natural tie-dye workshop using mangrove bark.

The study visit enhanced participants’ understanding of community-based resource management and inspired new ideas to promote sustainable livelihoods, increase income opportunities, and support long-term development in their communities.

This activity was conducted under BOBLME Phase II Project, Outcome



1.1: The ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) institutionalized at national level, including targeted transboundary fish stocks; Output 1.1.1: At least two EAFM plans implemented in each country; and Activity 1.1.1.5: EAFM Implementation in the Country’s Sites (Thailand).



## SEAFDEC participates in BOBLME II – Thematic Preparatory Sessions

SEAFDEC participated in the BOBLME II Thematic Preparatory Sessions which took place from 16 to 18 February 2026 at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand. The sessions were convened as part of the BOBLME II Partner Coordination Meeting to strengthen strategic alignment in preparation for the

3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Project Steering Committee (RPSC). *Ms. Suwanee Sayan*, Senior Project Planning and Management Officer, and *Ms. Rattana Tiaye*, Fisheries Management Researcher and Activity Leader for Port Management under Outcome 1.1 (EAFM), represented SEAFDEC and attended the meeting in person. Their participation reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to enhancing

regional cooperation and advancing sustainable fisheries and ecosystem management in the Bay of Bengal region.

Along with the Implementing and Executing Agencies of the BOBLME II Project, the meeting brought together representatives from SEAFDEC, the

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## SEAFDEC participates in BOBLME II – Thematic Preparatory Sessions

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Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), IUCN and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP).



Discussions focused on aligning agency priorities and strategies for the 2026 Annual Workplan and Budget (AWP/B), as well as on designing the proposed regional coordination mechanism, the Consortium for Conservation and Restoration (CCR) BOBLME under Component 5.1, which aims to strengthen institutional

mechanisms at regional and national levels for the planning, coordination, and monitoring of the BOBLME. Participants also initiated technical exchanges on approaches to monitoring the health of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) under Component 5.2, emphasizing adaptive, results-

based management and the sharing of information and lessons learned.

The meeting also provided a valuable platform for cross-agency dialogue to identify synergies, minimize duplication of efforts, and strengthen integration across project components. ❖

## SEAFDEC, IUCN, and FAO convene meeting to finalize BOBLME II Workplan with Indonesia



The Meeting on the Finalization of the Workplan for the Implementation of the BOBLME II Project with Indonesia was held from 4 to 6 March 2026 at SEAFDEC/TD in Samut Prakan, Thailand. Organized by SEAFDEC in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and FAO, the meeting was attended by 31 participants (12 females and 19 males). The meeting aimed to finalize the two-year workplans (2026–2027) across five (5) project components,

including EAFM and IUU (Component 1), Port Management and Gear Marking (Component 3), Marine Managed Areas and Biodiversity Conservation (Component 2), Livelihoods and Community Resilience (Component 4), and Regional Governance, Coordination, and Monitoring (Component 5).

The three-day meeting gathered representatives from Indonesia's Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (MMAF) including the National Coordinator and technical officers responsible for EAFM, IUU, Port Management, and Gear Marking, along with experts and activity leaders from SEAFDEC and IUCN. Participants reviewed and finalized the BOBLME II Project workplan for July 2026–June 2027 for endorsement by the Regional Project Steering Committee

(RPSC). Discussions also addressed institutional and implementation arrangements, coordination mechanisms at both national and regional levels, and delivery modalities for regional and country-based activities.

A key expected outcome of the meeting was the agreement on the proposed activities implemented in Indonesia under relevant outcomes, including EAFM, IUU, MMA strengthening, ETP action plans, resilience and livelihoods, and governance and monitoring. The meeting was also expected to come up with finalized two-year workplans, a consolidated 2026 implementation plan, and clearly defined implementation modalities to ensure the effective and coordinated execution of the BOBLME II Project in Indonesia. ❖

## SEAFDEC and IUCN discuss workplan alignment for the BOBLME II Project

On 12 March 2026, at SEAFDEC Secretariat, *Mr. Adirake Markphol* from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) met with representatives from SEAFDEC/TD, led by *Mr. Isara Chanrachakij* and *Ms. Suwanee Sayan* from the Project Planning and Management Division, to discuss the implementation of the BOBLME II Project and strengthen alignment between the components implemented by SEAFDEC and IUCN.

Under the BOBLME II Project, five (5) components are implemented by the executing agencies. SEAFDEC is responsible for Components 1, 3, and 5, which focus on promoting the ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) and reducing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, improving port management and the marking of fishing gear, as well as supporting project monitoring and coordination. Meanwhile, IUCN is responsible for



Components 2, 4, and 5, which cover the establishment of marine management

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## SEAFDEC and IUCN Discuss Workplan Alignment for the BOBLME II Project

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areas, strengthening the resilience and livelihoods of coastal communities, and contributing to project monitoring and coordination as the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU).

During the discussion, both organizations presented their planned activities and workplans for 2026 to

identify opportunities for collaboration and strengthen linkages among the project components. In particular, potential cooperation between Components 1 and 2 was discussed, including possible participation by relevant agencies such as the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), Thailand and IUCN in the development of EAFM

plans. SEAFDEC also welcomed IUCN to participate in relevant SEAFDEC events and activities. In addition, the meeting discussed the arrangement for establishing the National Project Steering Committee under the BOBLME II Project to support effective project coordination and implementation.



## Regional study visit to Malaysia and Indonesia on fishing port standard and fishing port management (waste and pollution management) under the BOBLME II Project



Two staff members from the Marine Engineering Section of SEAFDEC/TD, *Mr. Thaweesak Thimkrap* and *Mr. Khunthawat Manomayidthikarn*, participated in a study visit to Malaysia and Indonesia on Fishing Port Standard and Fishing Port Management (Waste and Pollution Management) from 12 to 16 January 2026. They were accompanied by *Dr. Sutak Jirattanawong*, Deputy Executive Director for Fisheries Business Development (FMO), and *Ms. Roongnapa Wongwaipairote*, Head of the Establishment Inspection Group (Department of Fisheries). The objectives were to conduct a study visit and observe best practice standards for waste and pollution management at fishing ports in LKIM Batu Maung and Teluk Bahang Fisheries Complex in Malaysia, as well as in Bungus Oceanic Fishing Port at Padang, Indonesia. This activity is under the BOBLME project phase II, Component 3: Management of coastal and marine pollution to improve ecosystem health.

- **LKIM Batu Maung and Teluk Bahang Fisheries Complex, Malaysia**

From 12 to 13 January 2026, *Mdm. Rashima bt. Baharuddin*, the Deputy Director-General of Development of the Lembaga Kemajuan Ikan Malaysia (LKIM), chaired the management engagement session and led the site visit in Pulau Pinang. The session focused on unloading activities and waste management systems, with the aim of supporting future studies and regional cooperation initiatives.

The visit provided a platform for technical exchange, allowing participants to observe port operations firsthand, discuss operational challenges, and share experiences on improving efficiency, cleanliness, and environmental sustainability at fishing ports.

Also in attendance were the Director of the Infrastructure Division, the Director of the Fish Landing and Strengthening Supervisory Division, representatives from the Design and Development Division, and officials from the Malaysian Fisheries Department. Their participation contributed to comprehensive discussions on port

infrastructure planning, regulatory oversight, and the implementation of effective waste management practices in line with national policies and international standards.

- **Bungus Oceanic Fishing Port, Padang, Indonesia**

From 15 to 16 January 2026, *Mr. Widodo, S.Pi, M.Sc.*, the Head of the Bungus Ocean Fishing Port, offered important insights, and vessel docking and repair.

A key highlight was the integrated waste management approach, particularly the Waste Bank initiatives, which demonstrated effective management practices for both inorganic and organic waste. These included waste exchange systems, eco-paving production, maggot cultivation, and composting. The visit concluded with a discussion session where participants shared observations, exchanged experiences, and identified lessons learned to support improvements in waste and pollution management at fishing ports in the region.



## TD hosts Strategic Planning Meeting on Fisheries Acoustics for Stock Assessments in Southeast Asia



SEAFDEC/TD hosted the “SEAFDEC Strategic Planning Meeting on Fisheries Acoustics for Stock Assessments in Southeast Asia” from 17 to 18 February 2026 at Samut Prakan, Thailand. A total

of 18 representatives from SEAFDEC Departments, comprising four from the SEAFDEC Secretariat, three from IFRDMD, three from MFRDMD (one in person and two online), and eight from TD participated in the meeting.

The meeting aimed to review existing hydroacoustic activities among SEAFDEC Departments, jointly formulate short-, medium-, and long-term regional workplans, and define

roles and collaboration mechanisms to strengthen sustainable hydroacoustic-based fisheries resource assessment across Southeast Asia. This meeting is the activity under JTF7 project titled, “Enhanced Marine Research Capacities to Manage Fisheries Resources: Enhancing capacity for estimating fishery biomass through scientific hydroacoustic surveys.”

## M.V. SEAFDEC 2 launches Joint Fisheries Resources Survey in Myanmar Waters

SEAFDEC/TD, in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries Myanmar and universities in Myanmar, conducted the “Fisheries Resources Survey in Myanmar Waters by M.V. SEAFDEC 2” from 12 February to 2 April 2026. The survey aimed to assess the status of marine fisheries resources and environmental conditions in Taninthayi Coastal Fishing Area in Myanmar waters, as well as strengthen the capacity of researchers from TD and Myanmar.

Across a total of 45 survey stations, demersal and pelagic fishery resources were collected using bottom vertical longlines and midwater trawls. The survey



utilized oceanographic equipment to collect environmental samples including microplastics, fish larvae, plankton, and sediment. These were collected using Conductivity, Temperature, Depth (CTD)

instruments, Neuston net, Bongo net, phytoplankton net, and Smith McIntyre grab, respectively. A hydroacoustic survey using the SIMRAD EK80 was also conducted.

## TD, DOF Thailand hold workshop to finalize Bangsaphan District Fisheries Management Plan

SEAFDEC/TD, in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries (DOF), Thailand, organized a series of activities to develop, finalize, and formalize the Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) for Bang Saphan District, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province, under the project “Improving Fishers’ Livelihoods and Fisheries Co-management in Inland and Coastal Small-Scale Fisheries.”

The process began with a Stakeholder Engagement Workshop held on 10–11 February 2026, which brought together 28 participants (19 men and 9 women) from TD, the Bang Saphan District Fisheries Office, Kasetsart University, and key stakeholders, including local fishers from the Bang Saphan Fisheries Network, community representatives, government agencies, the National Park



authority, and private sector partners such as Sahaviriya Steel Industries and Prachuap Port. The workshop focused on reviewing and validating the draft FMP, incorporating stakeholder feedback, and identifying priority actions to support sustainable fisheries management and improve livelihoods in the area.

Following the workshop, on 12 February 2026, SEAFDEC/TD participated in a resource enhancement

activity at Mae Ramphung Beach in collaboration with the Bang Saphan Fisheries Network. The activity included the release of fish fingerlings to restore natural fish stocks and the installation of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) to provide habitats and support the recovery of marine resources, contributing to the sustainability of community-based fisheries.

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## TD, DOF Thailand hold workshop to finalize Bangsaphan District Fisheries Management Plan

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Building on these efforts, the “Formalization Meeting of the Fisheries Management Plan in Bang Saphan District” was held on 24–26 March 2026. The meeting aimed to raise awareness of the finalized FMP and to discuss initial approaches for its

implementation. Participants included representatives from SEAFDEC/TD, the Prachuap Khiri Khan Provincial Fisheries Office, Bang Saphan District Fisheries Office, the Bang Saphan Fisheries Network, government agencies, local administrative organizations, the National Park authority, and partner institutions.

The program featured consultations with provincial and district-level agencies, presentation of the finalized FMP, and discussions to identify practical directions for implementation.

The event strengthened coordination among stakeholders and fostered a shared understanding toward effective execution of the plan. In addition, a project signboard was installed at the fishers’ group site to enhance visibility and awareness of the initiative.

The finalized Fisheries Management Plan serves as a guiding framework for sustainable fisheries management in Bang Saphan District, reinforcing co-management practices and contributing to improved livelihoods for small-scale fishing communities. ❏

## Study on the ballpen squid from the lift net supply chain in Calauit Island, Busuanga, Palawan, Philippines

SEAFDEC/TD, in collaboration with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Philippines, conducted a field study on the squid supply chain in Calauit Island, Busuanga, Palawan, Philippines, from 23 to 27 March 2026.

The initiative aims to strengthen small-scale fisheries supply chains, enhance fishers’ income, and promote social equity. Specifically, the study seeks to: 1) map and analyze the structure, functions, and key actors along the squid supply chain from harvesting to final consumption; and 2) identify key constraints affecting production, processing, distribution,

and market access. The survey engaged approximately 60 respondents, including fishers, middlepersons or retailers, processors, resort and restaurant operators, souvenir shop owners, and consumers. In addition, the team visited the Municipal Office and the Local Government Unit (LGU) to introduce the study objectives and obtain relevant input and recommendations.

This activity forms part of the project “Improving Fishers’ Livelihood and Fisheries Co-Management in Inland and Coastal Small-Scale Fisheries (2025–2029),” supported by the Japanese Trust Fund VII (JTF7). The outputs of the study will include a comprehensive



field report and supply chain analysis, which are expected to support efforts in improving operational efficiency, strengthening community resilience, and promoting sustainable and inclusive fisheries development across Southeast Asia. ❏

## Regional Workshop on Information Exchange on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) for Combating IUU Fishing in Southeast Asia

SEAFDEC/TD, in collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), organized the “Regional Workshop on Information Exchange on Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) for Combating IUU Fishing in Southeast Asia” from 24 to 26 February 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand. This workshop was an activity under the project “Strengthening Regional Capacity to Combat IUU Fishing and Promote Safe, Fair and Sustainable Fisheries in Southeast Asia” which has been implemented from 2024 to 2026.

A total of 45 participants attended the workshop, including practitioner-level officers responsible for MCS activities to combat IUU fishing from ASEAN Member States (AMSs), except Singapore, as well as representatives from FAO/RAP, GIZ, the SEAFDEC Secretariat, and TD. The workshop provided an important opportunity for AMSs to share information, strengthen cooperation, and enhance joint efforts on MCS to combat IUU fishing. Moreover, the discussion on coordination on MCS to combat IUU fishing in the region and regional capacity building needs was

conducted during the workshop. The outputs will be used for consideration to conduct capacity building under the project in the future. ❏



# FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Date	Venue	Title	Organizer(s)
<b>2026</b>			
7 April	Online	1 <sup>st</sup> National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) Meeting of BOBLME II for Malaysia	IUCN
20–21 April	Bangkok	2 <sup>nd</sup> Scientific Technical Working Group (S-TWG) Meeting	SEC (Seaweed Project)
20–24 April	Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam	38 <sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific: Senior Officers Meeting	FAO
27 Apr–1 May	Hua Hin, Thailand	5 <sup>th</sup> World Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) Congress	TBTI
4–6 May	Brunei Darussalam	Mid-Year Conference and Exhibition 2026: Sustaining Our Oceans: Innovation, Governance and Resilience for a Blue Future (Expedition)	DOF Brunei Darussalam
12 May	Bangkok, Thailand	Meeting on the Preparation of the 2026–2027 Work Plan for the Implementation of the BOBLME II Project	DOF Thailand and SEAFDEC
15 May	Samut Prakan, Thailand	Workshop on Market Margin Analysis for the Small-scale Fisheries Supply Chain in Three Sites	TD
19–21 May	Bangkok, Thailand,	58 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council	SEAFDEC & DOF Thailand
19–22 May	Negombo, Sri Lanka	3 <sup>rd</sup> Regional Project Steering Committee (RPSC) Meeting of BOBLME Phase II Project	BOBLME II Project
28–30 May	Mumbai, India	14 <sup>th</sup> Governing Council Meeting of BOBP-IGO and “High-Level Meeting on Policy Guidance for Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Public Infrastructure in Achieving SDG 14”	BOBP-IGO
2–5 June	Brunei Darussalam	Mid-Year Conference and Exhibition 2026: Sustaining Our Oceans: Innovation, Governance and Resilience for a Blue Future (Conference)	DOF Brunei Darussalam
8–9 June	Samut Prakan, Thailand	Technical Meeting for the Discussion and Finalization of Activities and Work Plan for the Fishing Gear Marking	TD (BOBLME II Project)
8–12 June	Bangkok, Thailand	Regional Workshop on Key Challenges and Practical Solutions for Multispecies/Multigear (MSMG) Fisheries Management	SEC
9 June	Bangkok, Thailand	Workshop on Needs of MCS Implementation and Capacity Building to Combat IUU Fishing in Thailand	TD (BOBLME II Project)
9–10 June	Satun Province, Thailand	EAFM High-level Consultation for Leaders, Executives and Decision-makers (LEAD-EAFM)	TD
9–11 June	Samut Prakan, Thailand	Workshop on Finalization of the Small-scale Fisheries Supply Chain Study Report in Three Sites	TD
16–18 June	Nonthaburi, Thailand	Regional Training on Introduction and Methodology for Estimating IUU Fishing Losses in Southeast Asia	TD
30 June – 3 July	Seoul, Republic of Korea	5 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies	SOI
6–10 July	Samut Prakan, Thailand	Subregional Training Course and Consultation Workshop on Data Analysis and Collaborative Study of IOD Impacts on Fisheries Resources	TD
14–16 July	Bangkok, Thailand	Training Course on Human Resource Development on Traceability for Fish and Fishery Products for Eliminating IUU fishing	TD
28 July	Online	18 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Fisheries Consultative Forum (AFCF)	ASEAN & Philippines
29–30 July	Online	34 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Fisheries (ASWGF)	ASEAN & Philippines
4–7 August	Bangkok, Thailand	Regional Workshop on Introduction from the Sea	SEAFDEC and CITES
4–6 September	Rome, Italy	3 <sup>rd</sup> Small-Scale Fisheries Summit (SSF Summit 2026)	FAO
4–5 and 11 September	Rome, Italy	11 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Regional Secretariat Network (RSN)	FAO
7–11 September	Rome, Italy	37 <sup>th</sup> Session of FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI)	FAO
8–10 September	Cebu, Philippines	SAFET Conference '26	SAFET
16–18 November	Chiangmai, Thailand	49 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of SEAFDEC Program Committee	SEC & TD
19–20 November	Chiangmai, Thailand	29 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Fisheries Consultative Group of the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Strategic Partnership	SEC

## TD joins Royal Thai navy's coastal sustainability event

SEAFDEC/TD participated in the Mine Squadron's event "99 Years Under the Royal Benevolence of His Majesty the King: Breathing Life into the Coast" on 31 March 2026 at the Mine Squadron, Royal Thai Fleet, Samut Prakan Province. By planting Mangrove Apples, this initiative aimed to restore coastal ecosystems, enhance marine biodiversity and reduce pollution for long-term environmental sustainability.



## TD supports Department of Disease Control's Capacity Building Workshop



SEAFDEC/TD provided the fishery training vessel "M.V. SEAFDEC," along with its professional crew, to support a practical training session for the Department of Disease Control (DDC) of Thailand.

This session is a key component of the "Capacity Building Workshop for Newly Appointed International Communicable Disease Control Officers" for fiscal year 2026. The training was conducted on 20 January 2026 at the SEAFDEC/TD pier. The collaboration aimed to enhance the operational readiness and competency of officers stationed at international Points of Entry.

## TD joins the Celebration of National Children's Day



SEAFDEC/TD joined Thailand at its 2026 celebration of the National Children's Day on 10 January at the Fort Phra Chulachomklao at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River in Samut Prakan. TD showcased educational materials and games, with fishery resources conservation as the theme. The activity drew enthusiastic participation from groups of children accompanied by their chaperones.

The National Children's Day in Thailand is traditionally celebrated on the second Saturday of the year and receives widespread public attention. Most government organizations, including the Prime Minister and the military, stage impressive shows and activities for the benefit of children, underscoring their importance to the future of the nation.

### Note for contributors

The SEAFDEC Newsletter publishes quarterly news on all aspects of fisheries in Southeast Asia. The Editors reserve the right to accept and/or abridge articles based on available space. Anyone wishing to submit an article to the SEAFDEC Newsletter is requested to send it to the Editor in Chief or Editors at the given addresses.

Information in this Newsletter may be quoted only if reference is made to SEAFDEC.

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## Workshop on Strengthening Regional Fisheries Governance and Technology Integration to Combat IUU Fishing in the Indo-Pacific

SEAFDEC/TD, in collaboration with the Government of Canada, organized the “Workshop on Strengthening Regional Fisheries Governance and Technology Integration to Combat IUU Fishing in the Indo-Pacific” from 17 to 19 March 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The workshop was attended by a total of 71 participants (64 in person and 7 via online platforms). The delegation included officials responsible for implementing monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Distinguished representatives from international and technical organizations also participated, including several governmental & intergovernmental institutions: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), NOAA, FAO, and the SEAFDEC Secretariat and Training Department. Technical & Strategic Partners included Canada’s



Archipelago Marine Research, Global Fishing Watch, the IMCS Network, TMT, C4ADS, Skylight, MDA Space, OceanMind, RPOA-IUU, and Unseenlabs.

The aims of the workshop were to share information on regional efforts to combat IUU fishing, to introduce and promote the adoption of innovative MCS technologies, and to strengthen institutional cooperation in implementing measures to combat IUU fishing in the region.

Following the workshop, participants gained updated information on regional efforts to combat IUU fishing, as well as exposure to demonstrations and documentation of MCS technologies and innovations used to address the issue, such as electronic reporting, satellite tracking, and AI-driven analytics. The workshop also helped initiate and strengthen technical and institutional cooperation for implementing measures to combat IUU fishing in the region.



## SEAFDEC launches 2026 RFPN Program

SEAFDEC welcomed the first batch of Regional Fisheries Policy Network (RFPN) members for 2026 for a 1-year term at its Secretariat in Bangkok, Thailand. The six RFPN 2026 members, each nominated by their respective country, are *Ms. Devi Setya Rini* from Indonesia, *Mr. Khamhou Thongsamouth* from Lao PDR, *Ms. Nay Chi Cho Linn* from Myanmar, *Mr. Jay-ar Pol Mahinay* from the Philippines, *Mr. Chairat Bamrungsook* from Thailand, and *Mr. Vu Van Tam* from Viet Nam. The RFPN program aimed to strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation in fisheries policy among AMSs.



*New batch of RFPN (from left to right), Ms. Devi Setya Rini from Indonesia, Mr. Khamhou Thongsamouth from Lao PDR, Ms. Nay Chi Cho Linn from Myanmar, Mr. Jay-ar Pol Mahinay from the Philippines, Mr. Chairat Bamrungsook from Thailand, and Mr. Vu Van Tam from Viet Nam*

During the Introduction of the 2026 RFPN Program on 16 January 2026, each RFPN member presented their diverse technical backgrounds and practical experience across various fisheries areas, ranging from inland to marine resource assessment and management. Their multidisciplinary background includes aquaculture, capture fisheries, bioecology, the

environment, marine fishing vessels, fisheries management, food safety, and post-harvest management, as well as related disciplines. RFPN members expect to gain new knowledge and skills, experience cultural exchange, build strong networking as well as friendship to strengthen cooperation across regions, and support SEAFDEC’s work on regional fisheries policy. Furthermore, RFPN members also had an opportunity

to present their topic articles and workplans throughout the year.

On a concluding note, the Secretary-General of SEAFDEC, *Ms. Sampan Panjarat* highlighted the program’s role in cultivating future leaders who will drive effective, collaborative fisheries management throughout Southeast Asia.

