

# **APFIC REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON CERTIFICATION SCHEMES FOR CAPTURE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**

**Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
Sheraton Hotel 18-20 September 2007**

## **PROSPECTUS**

### **Background**

International trade in seafood is an important and expanding area of importance for countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Given that most of the top seafood producing countries is in the Asian-Pacific region it is crucial that information and analyses are done on costs and benefits.

The 29<sup>th</sup> Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) recommended that, as one of its two major work themes in 2007-08, APFIC should focus on standards and trade as one of the emerging issues in the region. In particular, the member countries specifically requested APFIC to review the costs and benefits associated with certification schemes for fisheries and aquaculture in the APFIC region. In response to this, APFIC will convene a Regional Consultative Workshop for its Members aimed at making an objective evaluating of the potential in certification and discussing with members about what is suitable for the region.

At the Third Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held in New Delhi, India (4-8th September, 2006) member countries recognized that internationally accepted guidelines for the development of certification of aquaculture products were needed. The Sub-Committee members encouraged FAO to play a lead role in facilitating the development of these guidelines, which could be considered when national and regional aquaculture standards are developed.

With the increased attention given to certification of fisheries and aquaculture products, there is a growing proliferation of product certification systems, "good aquaculture practice" guidelines, Codes of Conduct, and other mechanisms/schemes which are providing labels or basis for the marketing of high quality, safe and sustainable seafood<sup>1</sup> products. Without some harmonization among regional countries, this proliferation of certification schemes has the potential to confuse consumers, importing countries, lead to increased costs, and potentially constrain trade. Asian domestic and intraregional trade in seafood products is growing, in line with increasing free-trade agreements between countries. This opens new opportunities for trade and development, perhaps helping to avoid some of the complex procedures of other importing regions, but also poses challenges. This further emphasizes the need for harmonization of food safety assurance procedures among trading partners in Asia. Such cooperation may also avoid problems of residues being transferred from one country to another.

Producers and producing countries that internationally trade with seafood products are increasingly being scrutinized by consumers, supermarkets and importing countries to produce seafood following certain standards and criteria, e.g. food safety standards, environmental requirements, ethical considerations etc. To continue to export seafood products it is crucial that the producing countries are kept updated on requirements and have a continuous capacity building in areas related to standards and trade.

---

<sup>1</sup> Through out this document, seafood refers to the products of both capture fisheries and aquaculture from marine, brackishwater and freshwater environments

## Goal and objectives of the Workshop

This workshop will build on input to make a set of recommendations and follow-up actions in relation to certification schemes for Fisheries and Aquaculture.

1. Examine the options and opportunities related to involvement of fisheries and aquaculture in certification schemes.
2. Discuss potential costs and benefits from certification schemes in an Asia-Pacific context.
3. Develop an action plan for members to further address their activities relating to certification issues in fisheries and aquaculture<sup>2</sup>

It is the goal of the workshop to have a consensus build by APFIC members and the relevant regional intergovernmental organizations on how to develop the full potential of certification schemes. It is hoped that the workshop will agree on strategies to address the identified issues and design an "APFIC Member's Plan of Action" to implement the strategies, at national, sub-regional and regional levels.

## Mechanism of the workshop

The workshop will be based around technical presentations relating to the three themes outlined in the objectives above.

The workshop will also be informed from a poster presentation consisting of Country posters, partner initiatives/experiences and papers describing current status in the region or relevant to the region.

The workshop will use a process of working groups to elaborate responses to a number of key questions:

1. What action needs to be taken to ensure participation of APFIC member countries in the certified markets (national, regional, global)?
2. What are the major costs and benefits from certification schemes?
3. How prepared are the national institutional arrangements to deal with existing and future certification systems (national, regional, global)?
4. What is the short term/medium term vision for the future for certification of fisheries and aquaculture in the region.

## Venue & timing

- The proposed venue for the workshop will be in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam.
- Dates: 18 - 20 September 2007.

## Partners and participants

The workshop will be a collaborative effort between a number of Regional Organizations and APFIC member countries:

**1) Asia Pacific Fisheries Commission (APFIC)** will take the lead in organizational arrangements and ensure the participation of senior fisheries officials from some of its member countries in Asia and the Pacific

---

<sup>2</sup> The action plan could involve recommendations as to how countries would engage with global programmes for certification, or how they may better inform themselves or engage with global decision making processes regarding the development of such schemes. APFIC's role in facilitating this would also be considered.

**2) Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC)** is working with ecolabeling of especially small-scale fisheries. They will be a key partner in implementing any agreed strategies for SE Asian countries related to fisheries certification.

**3) Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA).** FAO and NACA are collaborating on a global programme to develop guidelines for certification in aquaculture. It will be important to coordinate efforts fisheries and aquaculture certification together with NACA.

**4) INFOFISH.** INFOFISH is an important regional partner in aspects related to trade of seafood products. Certification schemes are closely linked to trade and input from INFOFISH on trade relations are of great importance to any discussion of seafood certification.

Approximately 40-50 participants are expected.