



**Asia Regional Ministerial Meeting on Aquaculture for Food
Security, Nutrition and Economic Development
Hotel Hilton, Colombo, Sri Lanka
28-29 July 2011**

**The Colombo Declaration:
A Commitment to Regional Cooperation in
Aquaculture Development for Food Security, Nutrition,
and Economic Development in Asia**

The Declaration

- We are inspired by the success of aquaculture development in many parts of Asia and recognize that aquaculture now provides more than half of the fish consumed in Asia.
- We are convinced of the immense potential that exists and the need for accelerating the growth and expansion of aquaculture in the region.
- We believe that technical cooperation amongst countries in the region is the way forward; and that this cooperation can be sustained, economic linkages reinforced, and capacities to achieve potentials and meet future needs for food and livelihood security be enhanced by political leadership.

Aquaculture came to be globally recognized as an important economic sector with the Technical Consultation on Aquaculture in Kyoto in 1976¹, primed for the new millennium with the Bangkok Declaration and Strategy of 2000², and infused with greater vigour by the renewed affirmation of its importance at the Global Conference on Aquaculture in Phuket in 2010³.

These events have inspired many national, regional and global initiatives in aquaculture development. These were guided by the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries⁴ and the principle of technical cooperation among Countries. They were implemented through practical institutional arrangements among Governments in the region and supported by various mandatory and voluntary instruments to spur responsible advancement of aquaculture and to effectively govern its expansion. A number of countries, individually as well as together, achieved notable progress through technology and progressive policies.

Recognizing that the full potential of aquaculture to contribute to poverty alleviation, human development and social empowerment can be realised with consistent, responsible policies and goals that encourage sustainable development and by sharing experiences and knowledge, many countries and their institutions of the Asian Region generated exemplary models and useful lessons in regional technical and economic cooperation and networking for aquaculture development.

The outcome of such regional cooperation and the economic linkages along with the robust efforts by the countries has been the remarkable increase in aquaculture productivity followed by a steady expansion in its development in most countries of the region. Its benefit to societies has been a more prosperous and a better nourished population.

However, sustaining the momentum of aquaculture development is a challenge on account of mounting number and severity of risks from adverse processes of nature, and growing scarcity of and increasing competition for resources, driven by an ever increasing demand for its products.

Our Commitment

We⁵ therefore, on this day the 29th July 2011, at Colombo, Sri Lanka, resolve to commit our will, resources and support, and collectively exert our political leadership:

1. To strengthen the contribution of aquaculture to food security, nutrition and economic development in Asia;
2. To share and disseminate the achievements from individual national efforts at technological advancement and policy development in aquaculture to help elevate the social and economic status of the countries in the Asian region;
3. To raise the capacities of all nations in the Asian Region to solve persistent, new and future problems of aquaculture on our path to better and sustained productivity, assured food security and social equity by bringing together and harnessing the intellectual and material resources of our countries;
4. To sustain the viability and increase the capabilities of the various institutional arrangements for technical and economic cooperation in the Asian region, and enhance the effectiveness of the relevant regional and international instruments to scientifically develop and wisely govern the development of aquaculture;
5. To make aquaculture development one of the instruments to achieve regional aspirations of social and economic development and to enhance prosperity among our nations and our peoples⁵,
6. To periodically review and follow-up on our commitments outlined in this Declaration and the attached strategy framework, and
7. Invite all stakeholders including the donor and development assistance community to join us in our commitment and resolve.

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1. *FAO. 1976. Report of the FAO Technical Conference on Aquaculture. Kyoto, Japan, 26 May – 02 June 1976. FAO, Rome. 93pp.*
 2. *NACA/FAO. 2000. Aquaculture Development Beyond 2000: the Bangkok Declaration and Strategy. Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium, 20-25 February 2000, Bangkok, Thailand. NACA, Bangkok and FAO, Rome. 27pp.*
 3. *FAO/NACA. 2011. Phuket Consensus; a reaffirmation of commitment to the Bangkok Declaration and Strategy. Global Conference on Aquaculture 2010. 22-25 September 2010. Phuket, Thailand. FAO, Rome (in press).*
 4. *FAO. 1995. Code of conduct for responsible fisheries. FAO, Rome. 41pp.*
 5. *The list of Ministers and Ministerial representatives attended the Asia Ministerial Meeting is given in Annex 1.*
 6. *The proposed strategy framework for regional cooperation in aquaculture development is outlined in the meeting document entitled “Regional cooperation for improving the contribution of aquaculture to food security, nutrition and economic development in Asia: a strategy”. See Annex 2.*

**List of Hon. Ministers and Ministerial Representatives
Attended the Asia Ministerial Meeting**

Bangladesh

H.E. Md. Abdul Latif Biswas
Honourable Minister
Minister for Fisheries and Livestock

Cambodia

H.E. San Vanty
Under Secretary of State
Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries

China

H.E. Yang Xiu Ping
Ambassador of PR China to Sri Lanka

FIJI

H.E. Jocketani Cokanasiga
Honourable Minister
Ministry of Fisheries

India

Mr. Tarun Shridhar
Joint Secretary,
Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and
Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture,
Representing the Hon. Minister

Indonesia

Mr. Ketut Sugama
Director General of Aquaculture
Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Affairs
Representing the Hon. Minister

Korea DPR

H.E. Pak Thae Won
Honourable Minister
Ministry of Fisheries

Lao PDR

Mr. Mahanakhone Souriya
Deputy Director General
Department of Livestock and Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Representing the Hon. Minister

Malaysia

Mr. Raihan Bin Sharif
Deputy Secretary General (Planning)
Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based
Industry
Representing the Hon. Minister

Maldives

H.E. Ibrahim Didi
Honourable Minister
Minister for Fisheries and Agriculture

Myanmar

H.E. Khin Maung Aye
Honourable Deputy Minister for Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries

Nepal

H.E. Harinarayan Yadav
Honourable Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative

Philippines

H.E. Proceso J. Alcala
Secretary of Agriculture
Department of Agriculture

Sri Lanka

H.E. Rajitha Senarathne
Honourable Minister
Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
Development

Thailand

H.E. Kanok Khatikarn
Advisor to Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
Representing the Hon. Minister

Timor-Leste

H.E. Marcos Da Cruz
Secretary State
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

Viet Nam

H.E. Vu Van Tam
Honourable Vice Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Regional cooperation for improving the contribution of aquaculture to food security, nutrition and economic development in Asia: a strategy framework

The Global Imperatives for Regional Cooperation

Globally, food insecurity is a growing problem. The rate of yield increases, for the first time, has dropped even lower than the population growth. With the increasing consequences of climate change it may not improve. The cost of food and global inflation are on the rise even as demand for food accelerates. FAO estimates that the demand for food will rise by seventy per cent between now and 2050. Incomes are rising and more people are residing in urban areas. These will increase the demand for different types of food that include fish. Food crops are being used more and more for fuel. This will shunt edible grains and oil away from people's plates into car engines. Although rising food and oil prices currently keep over 42 million people in Asia in poverty, according to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Asia-Pacific countries can cushion themselves against food and fuel price shocks and natural disasters by more efficient use of resources and energy, making sustainable development the key to reducing poverty and increasing food security. The same applies to all food commodities and their production sectors, including aquatic food. It has been estimated that, at least to maintain the current level of global fish consumption, by the year 2030, the aquatic food production should be increased by nearly 50 percent, and that almost the entire increase have to come from aquaculture. Thus sustainable development of aquaculture with more responsible resource use becomes paramount in meeting the supply and demand gap for global aquatic food in the coming decades. Vital linkages and inter-relationships do exist between aquaculture and capture fisheries and such linkages should also be recognized and addressed while formulating the strategies for sustainable development of aquaculture in the region.

Optimal resource utilization and sustainable development comes only through cooperation at all levels and sectors, collectively addressing the issues of importance. Effective cooperation among countries can be brought about through effective mechanisms. For years we have spoken about a regional programming focus. While there are vivid examples of how regional programming can be effective, there remains some reluctance in many governments to move away from the familiar and comfortable bilateral arrangements. At the same time, there are growing benefits and increasing pressures to regionally work together and we must, therefore, respond.

Regional needs for cooperation

A key issue for the growth of aquaculture will be the ability of countries and organizations to strengthen their policy and institutional capacity to establish and implement policy and regulatory frameworks that are both transparent and enforceable. Incentives, especially economic incentives, deserve to be given more attention in the planning and management of aquaculture development. Most Asian countries have clear policies governing aquaculture development. However, some countries are at a stage in which they need to put more effort at strengthening their institutions, human resources and technology base. Regional cooperation can accelerate the process and reduce the cost of doing so. Over the years, regional cooperation has brought considerable benefits to aquaculture development through the sharing of knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, globalization has widened the opportunities for cooperation. A strong regional cooperation will enhance the global system for cooperation and increase its benefits for the region and countries.

The potential institutional partners to an Asian Regional Cooperation in Fisheries and Aquaculture Development

Regional cooperation in aquaculture in Asia began with the inception of the ADCP (Aquaculture Development and Coordination Programme), a global programme of FAO, supported by UNDP, in 1975. ADCP succeeded in facilitating the creation of a regional cooperation mechanism, the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA) in 1990. There are other models of regional cooperation in Asia which also have contributed to aquaculture development. They include:

- INFOFISH was the first to evolve from a project to an intergovernmental organization. It has included aquaculture in its fisheries trade, marketing and information programmes;
- The Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC) is a treaty organization, established in December 1967 to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development in the region, develop and manage the fisheries potential of the region by rational utilization of the resources for providing food security, and alleviating poverty through transfer of new technologies, research and information dissemination activities;
- The Bay of Bengal IGO, which had evolved from a long running project supported by a suite of donors focuses both on fisheries issues and fish farming in the Bay of Bengal countries besides strong advocacy of the need to address livelihood concerns;
- The Mekong River Commission (MRC) established in 1995 for jointly managing the shared water resources and developing the economic potential of the river has a mandate to cooperate in all fields of sustainable development, utilisation, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin;
- The regional and supra-national economic cooperation instruments including the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) have secretariats, programmes and working groups on fisheries and aquaculture development.

There are professional associations such as Asian Fisheries Society and also numerous regional projects in rural development that include certain aspects of fisheries and aquaculture. The institutions governing national aquaculture development and management are pivotal to bringing about these linkages and fostering cooperation.

The Principle for Regional Cooperation

Core Principle: The core principles of regional cooperation are both technical and economic cooperation among countries. The accepted shorthand is TCDC (Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries) and ECDC (Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries) and these are championed by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), ADB (Asian Development Bank), WB (World Bank) and long advocated by FAO in its multi-country development projects. NACA, SEAFDEC, BOB-IGO (Bay-of-Bengal Inter-Governmental Organization), INFOFISH in Asia, SPC (Secretariat of the Pacific Community) in the Pacific, and new or resurgent regional networks and regional aquaculture cooperation arrangements in other continents have provided a growing body of evidence that the principle can be made to work effectively and that its promised benefits are real.

Empowering element: Facing squarely the tensions inherent in the geo-political reality that States and Territories in any regional cooperation arrangement are at different stages of socio-economic development, a novel element was infused into the principle by NACA at the start of this Millennium: “The stronger members shall help the others”. This powerful formulation eases the pursuit of the ideal of achieving parity in development status among all members.

A Fundamental Approach to Regional Cooperation

Attainment of parity can be the first strategic objective of regional cooperation with this pragmatic formulation: *“Regional cooperation shall have the overall aim of expanding sustainable aquaculture development in the entire region and the special aim of accelerating the development of the less aquaculturally developed countries so that they can effectively pursue their national development aspirations”.*

The pragmatism is reflected in (a) the inclusiveness of the process and goal of cooperation and (b) the proposition that countries are assisted to achieve the development goals, which they set for themselves and not dictated to them. This defines the parameters of the strategy. First, it shall address common regional problems but shall leave and encourage the individual countries to set and pursue their own priorities. Second, it shall strengthen the capacities of countries in policy, institutional, technology and manpower development but refrain from imposing specific models and structures. Clearly it shall not seek to be an instrument for micro management, an impractical proposition in any case in a vast and diverse region as Asia.

The Areas for Cooperation

Regional cooperation has two linked areas, the strategic and the technical. In line with the principle and strategic approach to regional cooperation, and the stated imperatives for global and regional cooperation, the following strategic areas shall be adopted:

- Supporting and strengthening existing regional organizations whose mandates include fishery and aquaculture development;
- Improving inter-regional collaboration and networking between regional organizations to ensure synergy;
- Enhancing the competitiveness of aquaculture farmers and industries in the world market, developing regional markets and promoting more intra-regional trade;
- Promoting national farmer associations, linkages and relations among national associations, and facilitating the formation of a regional federation;
- Encouraging public private partnership and promoting joint ventures and investments;
- Strengthening the capacity of regional and national institutions and farmers organizations for information development, analysis and dissemination.

The more specific contents of technical areas and policy issues have been developed through a systematic and thorough global process and are found in the documented outcomes of the Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium¹ and the Global Conference on Aquaculture 2010². The broad priorities are indicated in these two instruments to facilitate a more refined process of prioritization at the institutional and national levels. The focus of this paper is thus on the strategic areas, which shall in fact facilitate the choice and implementation of the already established and widely agreed technical areas. A few key technical areas, which have been identified and prioritised by the Asian governments attending this Ministerial Meeting, to be implemented, through a phased approach, during the current decade, through enhanced regional cooperation are given below.

Proposed Priority Areas for Implementation

Farming systems

Develop cage culture and culture based fisheries through exchange of knowledge, information and experiences and sharing of seed stocks. Policies for encouraging aquaculture developments through empowering small-scale farmers by implementing Better Management Practices (BMPs) and adopting cluster management approach for organizing them using enhanced public-private-partnership concept.

Genetic improvement

Select most suitable aquatic species of regional significance for genetic improvement and develop improved strains through regional cooperative research and development programs and share the outcomes.

Aquatic animal health

Strengthen risk management strategies for movement of live aquatic animals intended for aquaculture to prevent the spread of trans-boundary aquatic animal diseases. Enhance capacity building programs for improving aquatic animal health management at national levels and improve collaboration among countries and with relevant regional and international agencies for implementing better disease surveillance, diagnosis, prevention and control of aquatic diseases.

Responses to climate change impacts

Share information on vulnerabilities and adaptabilities of small-scale farmers in Asia to climate change impacts; and as a policy, encourage and facilitate research and development and information and knowledge exchange on the improvement of the culture of low trophic level food fish, in particular carp species, through enhanced regional and international cooperation.

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- 1 NACA/FAO. 2000. *Aquaculture Development Beyond 2000: the Bangkok Declaration and Strategy. Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium, 20-25 February 2000, Bangkok, Thailand.* NACA, Bangkok and FAO, Rome. 27pp.
 - 2 FAO/NACA. 2011. *Phuket Consensus; a reaffirmation of commitment to the Bangkok Declaration and Strategy. Global Conference on Aquaculture 2010. 22-25 September 2010. Phuket, Thailand.* NACA, Bangkok and FAO, Rome (in press).