



联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

Organisation des Nations  
Unies pour l'alimentation  
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная организация  
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las  
Naciones Unidas para la  
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة  
الغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

E

# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

**Thirty-sixth Session**

**Dhaka, Bangladesh, 8-11 March 2022**

**Report of the Thirty-sixth Session of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission**

*Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:*

APRC Secretariat

APRC@fao.org

*This document may be printed on demand following an FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications. This and other documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)*

## Introduction

1. The Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC) was established in 1948 under the APFIC agreement as the Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council. It is an Article XIV FAO Regional Fishery Body established by FAO at the request of its Members. The Secretariat is provided and supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The name “Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council” was changed to “Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission” at the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the APFIC (Bangkok, Thailand, 23 November – 4 December 1993), along with amendments to the functions and responsibilities of the APFIC, giving more emphasis to sustainable development and management. Currently Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States of America and Viet Nam are Members.
2. The Report of the 36th Session is available online at:  
<https://www.fao.org/3/cb6875en/cb6875en.pdf>

## Objective and organization

3. The 36th Session of the APFIC was held (virtually) from 5 to 7 May 2021 in Bangkok, Thailand. The Session was opened by the Director-General, Mr. Mesak Pakdeekong, Department of Fisheries, Thailand. The Session was attended by 17 Members, two observer countries and seven observer regional organizations. There were 50 registered delegates from 17 Members of the APFIC.
4. The objectives of the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission were to:
  - a. review the inter-sessional activities of the APFIC since the 35th Session;
  - b. review and endorse the report of the 77th Meeting of the APFIC Executive Committee;
  - c. review the overview and report of the APFIC regional webinars and consider how the APFIC may move to a virtual or hybrid format for some of its work;
  - d. be informed of aquaculture innovation, knowledge-sharing and capacity development in the APFIC region and the development of a FAO Regional Platform for Aquaculture for knowledge-sharing;
  - e. be informed of the need to build capacity in assessment for the sustainable management of marine and inland fisheries in the APFIC region, and the potential for developing a regional capacity-building programme;
  - f. be informed of current limitations to the effective functioning of the APFIC and propose means to address them;
  - g. review and endorse the 2021–2022 programme of work and budget of the APFIC;
  - h. be informed of the work of APFIC observers and the work programmes of other regional organizations competent in fisheries and aquaculture and how they relate to the work of the APFIC.
5. The Commission reviewed the inter-sessional activities of the APFIC undertaken since the 35th Session and commended the work of the Secretariat and the technical support provided by FAO to APFIC Members over the biennium. The Commission appreciated FAO’s support to initiatives to build capacity and strengthen regional cooperation in support of the Port State Measures Agreement and to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the region and requested continued support under the Technical Cooperation Programme.

## Overview and Report of the APFIC regional webinars

6. In 2020–2021, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the physical convening of the APFIC 8th Regional Consultative Forum Meeting (RCFM) and other APFIC regional consultative workshops. To compensate for this and adapt to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the APFIC Secretariat organized a series of technical webinars in collaboration with INFOFISH to replace the

8th APFIC RCFM. The series of technical webinars largely took place prior to the virtual 36th APFIC Session and covered eight themes that are relevant to fisheries and aquaculture of the APFIC region:

- a. inland fisheries connectivity, irrigation and water management;
- b. publication launch of the Review of illegal fishing in APFIC region;
- c. antimicrobial resistance: simple to understand but often misunderstood;
- d. multispecies stock assessment for management;
- e. pushing the frontier of aquaculture development with innovation;
- f. subsidies and the current negotiations at the World Trade Organization;
- g. information and communication technologies for small-scale fisheries;
- h. characteristics and performance of co-management in Asia.

7. The Commission congratulated the Secretariat on the organization of the webinars and commended the high level of participation. It concurred that the virtual format is efficient and effective for increasing participation and cost savings, particularly in adapting to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, recognizing that there were still some limitations for those with poor internet connectivity.

8. The Commission also requested the APFIC Secretariat to continue to provide resource persons to technical meetings and workshops.

### **Aquaculture innovation, knowledge-sharing and capacity development in the APFIC Region**

9. The Commission considered the working paper and regional overview of Aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific. The overview provides a summary of emerging issues in aquaculture in the region. It also introduces the possible showcasing of the innovations that abound in the APFIC region in the aquaculture sector. It notes that the size and dynamic nature of the aquaculture sector in Asia offers opportunities to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to food security, nutrition, poverty alleviation and sustainable resources utilization. At the same time, numerous challenges need to be addressed.

10. The Commission was informed of innovations in farming technologies and system performance improvements covering the entire value chain. The Commission noted that the importance of Asia as a globally important aquaculture fish-producer required APFIC Members to have a strong voice in international fora such as the FAO Committee on Fisheries and its technical committees and to contribute to the development of international Guidelines such as the FAO Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture. The Commission concurred that there is a clear case for increasing access to knowledge and skills in sustainable aquaculture production practices. The Commission agreed on the importance of the FAO Aquaculture Platform and welcomed this initiative. Several APFIC regional partners offered their support to the initiative.

11. The Commission highlighted the importance of continued work on antimicrobial resistance in aquaculture.

### **Building capacity in assessment for the sustainable management of marine and inland fisheries**

12. The Commission was informed of the current limitations in the assessment of marine and inland fisheries in the region. The overall trend in the state of the world's marine fish stocks is one of increasing exploitation, an increase in the number of overfished stocks, and stagnating global catch. Despite this global picture, the recorded landings from the two main APFIC fishing areas (Area 57 Eastern Indian Ocean and Area 71 Western Central Pacific) indicate steady growth trends in marine capture fisheries. However, at the national level, a mixed picture emerges, indicating that coastal fishery resources are heavily fished and often show signs of over-exploitation. In inland fisheries, catches also appear to be increasing and now represent 24 percent of total regional capture fishery

production. However, there are plausible reasons to consider that the total inland fishery catch figure may be underestimated.

13. The Commission was further informed that the APFIC region represents some of the least assessed fisheries in the world. This has implications for management decision-making and for tracking the sustainable use of fishery resources. It also limits the Members' ability to report on SDG 14 (principally the targets: 14.2 Protect and restore ecosystems; 14.4 Sustainable fishing; 14.6 End subsidies contributing to overfishing; 14.7 Increase the economic benefits from sustainable use of marine resources; 14.b Support small scale fishers).

14. The Commission emphasized the importance of fisheries management grounded in science for sustainable marine and inland fisheries. It acknowledged the challenges related to lack of adequate capacity for conducting stock assessment and analyses and welcomed the development of an FAO initiative for capacity development to improve stock assessment for marine and inland applications.

15. The Commission also recognized the importance of training for reporting on SDG 14.b.

### **Addressing current limitations to the effective functioning of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission**

16. The 77th Executive Committee recommended that the Secretariat prepare options for the future operation of the Commission and to set out financial and operational procedures to achieve them. The Secretariat has prepared an overview of the principal issues but was unable to develop a comprehensive policy document for decision. This was due to the rapidly changing context of APFIC financial support and the move to virtual meetings. The Secretariat requested additional guidance from the Commission on how to proceed.

17. The Commission recognized the importance of the APFIC as a regionally focused platform and requested broader discussions and consultations among Members about APFIC's future.

18. The Commission agreed that the use of a virtual approach could be used for other workshops and events of the Commission, and that a hybrid format should be considered in the future. The Commission recommended the development of rules of procedure to ensure effective outcomes of virtual format workshops and decision-making events. It requested further information on the potential for establishing APFIC subcommittees for subregional arrangements and the possibility and implications of setting up a multi-donor/multi-country Trust Fund to support the Commission.

19. Noting the complex set of issues relating to the Commission and its functions, the Commission recommended the creation of an ad hoc working group in order to be better informed of the legal and financial implications of the future of the APFIC. It further recommended that the results of the working group be discussed at the 78th Executive Committee Meeting.

### **2021-2022 Programme of Work and Budget of the Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission**

20. The Commission endorsed the 2021–2023 biennial APFIC workplan with an amendment to include the establishment of a working group to look at addressing the limitations and the future of the Commission.

### **Conclusion**

21. The Commission elected China as the Chair of the Commission for the biennium, and Thailand as the Vice-Chair. It elected India, Malaysia and the Philippines as members of the Executive Committee. The Commission agreed that the 37th Session of the APFIC will be convened in China in 2023, with the date and venue to be communicated by the Host Government.