



CAPACITY BUILDING AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL: WORK OF SEAFDEC IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Fisheries are recognized as a very important sector that contributes to food security, livelihood, well-being, and economic development for people all over the world. During the past few decades, however, circumstances have changed where most of the fishery resources have reached their maximum yields or are on the verge of over-exploitation. The contribution and importance of the aquaculture sub-sector has become more prominent. In 2008, global aquaculture production reached 52.5 million tonnes accounting for 36.9% of the total fisheries production (FAO, 2010) with several countries in the Southeast Asian region among the top ten global aquaculture producers. To increase production from aquaculture, intensive culture technologies have been developed and widely practiced, resulting in several negative consequences such as increased use of feeds including low-value fish, high organic discharge and increased pressure to the environment, impact on species diversity, as well as occurrence of aquatic animal diseases. Such circumstances led to increasing use of chemicals and drugs as unnecessarily precautionary practices to prevent disease transmission and outbreaks. Accompanying the rapid and uncontrolled development of aquaculture, there are also emerging requirements to secure the quality and safety of aquaculture products for human consumption, as well as to ensure the health and welfare of aquatic animals.

In Southeast Asia, aquaculture activities are undertaken mostly by small-scale operators, with limited resources, capacity and knowledge, making it difficult to accommodate the emerging situations and requirements. Thus, appropriate capacity building activities are crucial for countries in the region, specifically to build capabilities at the farm level to enable fish farmers to apply the necessary prevention and control measures.

This presentation provides an overview of the capacity building activities of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), an inter-governmental organization working towards the promotion of sustainable fisheries development in the Southeast Asian region,

In summary, the priorities for capacity building activities relevant to aquatic animal health and welfare in the region could include: 1) enhancing capacity of fisheries and aquaculture-related authorities on aspects relevant to animal health and welfare, and food safety of aquaculture products with emphasis on promoting appropriate management and improving the aquaculture environment; 2) development of tool kits that are relevant and applicable for small-scale farmers to enhance their capacity to respond to emerging requirements; 3) strengthening the capacity of veterinary-related authorities on aquatic animal health and welfare as well as collaboration with fisheries and aquaculture-related agencies on relevant issues; and 4) fostering collaboration among countries in the region, and with international and regional organizations for exchanging information, mobilizing expertise, and enhancing national capacities to satisfy animal health and welfare and food safety requirements of aquaculture products. It is anticipated that integrated efforts in human resources development will help to enhance the contribution of fisheries as an ASEAN priority sector to economic development, with a view to the goals of ASEAN Economic Community Building by the year 2015, as targeted by ASEAN and supported by SEAFDEC under the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Strategic Partnership cooperation framework.

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