

Statement
Partnership Dialogue 4 Making Fisheries Sustainable

Thailand's Action on Combating IUU Fishing

In the past, fisheries had been undertaken in Thailand under an “open access” system, with fisheries law that had never been updated with current situation, while the law enforcement was also weak. This resulted in the level of fishing capacity that exceeded the available resources. These problems, coupled with emerging international requirements for combating IUU fishing makes it necessary for the Government of Thailand to reform its fishery industry to be more sustainable, environmentally- and socially-friendly.

Toward this, four new national fishery policies were established, including: 1) the Royal Ordinance on Fisheries (2015) as the new fisheries law; 2) the Fisheries Management Plan; 3) the National Plan of Action for Combating IUU Fishing (NPOA-IUU), and 4) the Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS).

Specifically, for combating IUU fishing, following initiatives have been undertaken;

1. Law Amendment:

Thailand successfully revised the relevant legal and policy frameworks in order to ensure the country's compliance with international and regional rules for conservation and management of fishery resources. The new Royal Ordinance on Fisheries came into force in November 2015, with key objectives including: achieving sustainability of fishery resources management; good governance; effectiveness in combating of IUU fishing with proportional and deterrent administrative and criminal sanctions; effective traceability system; and compliance with international rules and regulations. In addition, Thailand has acceded to the UN Fish Stock Agreement and the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures which are a key international agreements aiming to combat IUU fishing, and is currently preparing to accede to the FAO Compliance Agreement.

2. Fleet Restructure and Management

Thailand has been able to obtain clear picture of its fleet structure and situation. Many vessels in the record were found inexistence and thus were revoked from the registration system. The new vessel registration data under the Marine Department have also been synchronized with the DOF's fishing license. The integrated vessel database will be used to evaluate the highest sustainable catch level in Thai waters which will be the reference level to control the allowable catch level that will not affect the sustainability of marine resources. In addition, Thailand also adopted fleet reduction strategy and measures, including the Entry/Exit scheme which to be fully implemented starting from April 2018 onwards.

3. Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS)

MCS system and mechanism were established and strengthened. The new law states that every fishing vessel of 30 gross tonnages and over must be equipped with Vessel Monitoring System or the VMS equipment onboard. The Fishery Monitoring Center will carry out monitoring and surveillance over all vessels equipped with VMS. The Center operates 24 hours a day in cooperation with the Port-in/Port-out (PIPO) Centers, as well as the At-Sea Inspection of vessel with the aim of monitoring, control and surveillance of IUU fishing activities. The database can be

connected to other electronic systems such as the E-license, the Fishing Info 2 database networking and the traceability system.

There are 32 PIPO Centers and 19 Forward Inspection Points established to inspect Thai fishing fleets prior and after fishing. At-Sea Inspections is another measure to enhance MCS efficiency by inspecting suspicious fishing vessels in Thai waters and promptly arresting illegal fishing vessels. For controlling fishing vessels operating outside Thai waters and vessels transshipping aquatic animals, fishing vessels must inform the authority of any aquatic animal transshipment 24 hours prior to the activity. An “Electronic Reporting System” or ERS and “Electronic Monitoring” or EM are being developed to enable the vessel skipper to communicate directly to the DOF in term of reporting, requesting permission and so on.

4. Port State Measures:

Thailand's accession to the FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) has enhanced the country's ability to prevent the importation of IUU fish into its supply chain. The implementation of PSM is still a relatively new thing for the Thai authorities, however, Thailand has put efforts to strengthen port state measures to meet with international standards and requirements.

5. Labor Inspection on Board Fishing Vessel:

“Seaman Book” for Thai labor and “SeaBook” for migrant workers are issued to all crews to certify that they are legal labor. The authority will inspect the books, ID card and employment agreement before going out and after coming back from fishing to increase efficiency in labor protection.

6. Upgrading on Traceability System of Fisheries Products:

This is to ensure the traceability of fisheries products throughout the whole supply chain – from fishing port, transportation, processing plants, until exportation of the products. The catches would be inspected to determine the aquatic type, quantity and weight through two improved electronic traceability database systems. The first system is the “Thai Flagged Catch Certificate System” which was designed to inspect catches on Thai fleets through the whole supply chain. The system has been tested and proves to be very efficient. Another system is the “PSM Linked and Processing Statement System” or PPS, which is designed to inspect imported catches through the whole supply chain. The latter system is currently being tested.

7. DOF Restructuring and Increasing Manpower

The DOF [as Thailand's Competent Authority (CA)] has been restructured in October 2016 with additional human and financial resources to support the new fisheries governance and operation of systems. In order to meet with the objective, the working system is integrated into four clusters, operating as a network, coordinating instead of receiving orders in the chain of command to enhance efficiency and speed up the operational process.

8. Law enforcement

Serious deterrent sanctions were introduced under the new fisheries law. Owners of vessels and factories found to be involved in any illegal activities will now face both criminal and administrative sanctions. The number of officers has been increased to inspect, arrest, collect fines and prosecute, as well as to expedite the legal cases.

9. International Cooperation

Thailand has been enhancing international cooperation with third countries, which are other flag States, port owner States and coastal States, as well as Regional Fisheries Management Organizations or RFMOs to exchange information on fleet and fishing operation to combat IUU fishing both in Thai and international waters. For bilateral cooperation, Thailand has already signed MOU with five countries. Thailand is also in the process of revising MOU with nine more countries; while discussion is being conducted on possibility of establishing MOU with other ten countries.

In Conclusion

Since April 2015 reforming, overhauling and modernizing of its fisheries sector is an absolute priority for Thailand in order to make the industry becoming more sustainable, environmentally- and socially-friendly. While Thailand is taking every effort in combating IUU, the large scale of our fishing and fisheries sector including over 40,000 fishing vessels – large and small - would require extensive human and time resources for such reform. However, over one and a half year, we have achieved significant progress in order to set the right foundation to mitigate the challenges and impact. While the rules and regulations are being updated and infrastructure being put in place, Thailand at the same time have to deal with the sensitivity on well-being of people affected by such new rules and regulations. Nevertheless, the Government of Thailand has been, and would continue to commit to fulfill its international obligations and join with international community in the fight against IUU fishing and protection of the global marine resources. And above all / most importantly to ensure sustainable marine resources in the Thai waters.

Thank you