



**THE FOURTH REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON SHARED STOCKS:
RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT
IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA**

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**FUTURE REGIONAL FISHERIES RESOURCE SURVEY PROGRAM
OF SEAFDEC**

By:

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Background

SEAFDEC launched the Interdepartmental Collaborative Research Program in 1995 to fully utilize the new training/research vessel; M.V. SEAFDEC with the provision of additional project fund from Japan. The Interdepartmental Collaborative Research Program was conducted in the South China Seas in four geographical areas (Gulf of Thailand, Waters off Sabah and Sarawak, West Coast of the Philippines and Waters off Vietnam) during 1995-1999. The most of the reports, especially consolidated ones are under preparation.

At the Thirty-First Meeting of the Council of SEAFDEC held in Japan in March 1999, it was informed that current difficult budgetary circumstances are likely to continue at least for a few more years. Therefore, it can not be expected that the contribution by Japan will increase every year. The Government of Japan also hoped that SEAFDEC would make further efforts towards more efficient and effective implementation of its Program. From this standpoint, the Government of Japan suggested that SEAFDEC should explore the possibility to institutionalize a strong evaluation system in order to show more concrete results of its projects and cost effectiveness.

On 6th April 1999, the meeting to discuss about the Collaborative Research Program was held in MFRDMD with the representatives of the Secretariat, TD and MFRDMD. The following points were agreed with respect to the future Collaborative Research Program together with other technical issues on the collaboration among the Participated Departments.

- (a) The collaborative survey in Vietnam will be the last of its kind in the South China Sea and the proposed survey for Vietnam will proceed as scheduled from 21st April 1999
- (b) Future collaborative surveys should be reviewed and properly planned and organized to meet specific needs of fisheries and its development, with more committed participation by researchers from the Departments of SEAFDEC
- (c) The acoustic component for future surveys should be reviewed to include species identification and its outcome beneficial for the management and development of fisheries
- (d) Future project proposals may need to prepare for the scrutiny of the Program Committee
- (e) The Secretariat, TD and MFRDMD need to collaborate and put up the above proposals
- (f) Future proposals may take into consideration the transboundary fish stock including oceanic squids.

Proposal

It is therefore understood that the research program should be prepared with more focus on the regional needs and best possible use of physical equipment including vessel. The criteria of the research topics should be carefully elaborated. The followings are the proposals for the future collaborative surveys to be conducted by SEAFDEC.

1. Objectives of the Program

Under the SEAFDEC Strategic Plan, regional objectives were more clearly defined. All SEAFDEC programs and activities will have more regional directive when the prioritized Program are formulated. In this connection, it is proposed that future Collaborative Research Program will change its name to "Regional Fisheries Resource Survey Program".

The Regional Fisheries Resource Program should have more clear fisheries objectives in order to first meet with the mandate of SEAFDEC and fully mobilize the technical competence in the SEAFDEC framework. In addition, it can be considered that survey target should be focused on the items which agreed at the meeting in MFRDMD in April 1999 as the "Future proposals may take into consideration the trans-boundary fish stock including oceanic squids".

2. Scope of the Program

From the view of the above policy consideration and financial constraints, the present collaborative research program in the South China Sea will be discontinued. M.V. SEAFDEC which has been designed for a training vessel for tuna purse seine will in the future, mainly be used for training and exploratory work in Indian Ocean where tuna is comparatively abundant. Therefore, if the research program in South China Sea area is greatly needed, it will have to be elaborated with the condition that more appropriate research vessel will have to be identified.

In addition, if SEAFDEC continue to provide resource survey program to the coastal water in its member countries as conducted in the past program, this SEAFDEC's support may undermine the research initiatives by these member countries. SEAFDEC's initiative, under the Strategic Plan will therefore give more regional focus such as off shore areas, and complemented with the efforts by the national authorities in the coastal areas. If the target species are set for trans-boundary ones, these complementary efforts by SEAFDEC and the member countries will provide more comprehensive views on these fisheries stocks.

Program A.

It is therefore suggested that the regional researchers should meet and discuss areas where SEAFDEC should conduct its survey in accordance with the regional needs. Since there is very few high sea areas in the South China Sea, the target areas might be high seas and overlapping areas with neighboring countries in the South China Sea.

It is also suggested that the more clear fisheries objectives should be given. Based on the above suggestion, the target species can be trans-boundary fish stock. In addition, research focus should also given to the assessment of these stocks, and not only for the biological research. Off course, the oceanographic and environmental parameters which are proved to have linkage with the dynamics of the fisheries resources should also surveyed

together with other biological parameters such as plankton and larvae. By setting the target species of the survey, the required research component can be streamlined and interlinked in more meaningful way.

However, as SEAFDEC will not conduct the above survey under the current budgetary provision, extra budgetary funding source will first be sought. With some positive indication of the financial provision, the researcher from the concerned Departments of SEAFDEC and relevant member countries will elaborate the “Regional Fisheries Resource Survey Program” based on the agreed policy direction and scopes.

Program B.

Based on the immediate regional needs and the formal request by the member country (s), SEAFDEC can extend the support for the resource survey program. Due to the above policy, the objectives of the research proposal should be focused on the shared stock. The research program will be jointly elaborated by the requesting country(s) in collaboration with the relevant Departments of SEAFDEC. By the nature of shared stocks, few countries can be involved in the implementation of the program. Since the program is joint program with the member countries, the required financial and research responsibilities can be shared among the concerned countries and the SEAFDEC.

The Conclusion

The Participants of the meeting are invited to provide comments on the regional fisheries resource survey program, especially for the immediate needs and the priorities. It is also requested to provide the areas where SEAFDEC can support in this field. If the information on what resources survey have been conducted in the last year by the government initiative and the major constraints to assess the important fish stocks are provided, they are very useful base for SEAFDEC to further elaborate and reprioritize the program on the Regional Fisheries Resource Survey Program.