



Round Table for High Senior Business Meeting “Trawl fisheries and Bycatch management”

REBYC-II CTI; GCP /RAS/269/GFF

11 August 2015

Asia Airport Hotel, Patum Thani province

***Report by
Dr. Mala Supongpan***

1. Background to REBYC-II CTI Project

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (“FAO”) and the Department of Fisheries, Thailand, have signed the Letter of Agreement (LOA) for the execution of the GEF supported project “Strategies for trawl fisheries bycatch management” (REBYC-II CTI; GCP/RAS/269/GFF) which is co-funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The Food and Agriculture Organization and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center are implementing the project which works with the five participating countries (Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam).

Under the project work plan for Thailand, the Department of Fisheries, Marine Fisheries Research and Development Bureau, is implementing the project at two sites: Prachuab Kiri Khan and Chumphon. The Central Gulf Marine Fisheries Research and Development Center (CMDEC), located in Chumphon, is taking the lead in research into trawl fisheries and enlarged cod-end mesh size experiments. The second site in Trad province is being used to pilot management measures for closed areas and closed seasons to protect fish larvae and spawners. The Eastern Marine Fisheries Research and Development (EMDEC), located in Rayong province, is taking the lead for this research work. Research at both project sites involves the participation of stakeholder and the DOF actively seeks cooperation between officials and stakeholders in data sharing, analysis and presenting results for improved understanding between fishers and officials.

The Thai Sustainable Fisheries Roundtable, made up of eight Industry Associations involved in Thailand’s seafood trade, was established through a Memorandum of Understanding signed on November 2013. The Roundtable works closely with the Thai Department of Fisheries and Department of Labour, FAO, SEAFDEC, SFP (Sustainable Fisheries Partnership), and WWF to tackle the social and environmental issues rampant in the Thai seafood industry.

Results of the REBYC studies have already been shown to local stakeholders at the pilot sites in Prachuab Kiri Khan and Chumphon provinces. Now, the DOF requires the wider opinion from senior fishery business persons and fisher leaders for discussion on ways to solve the problems facing Thai trawl fisheries and bycatch management. Through the REBYC-II CTI project, the Division of the Marine Fisheries Research and Development wishes to arrange for the results of the REBYC-II CTI project studies relating to trawl fisheries to be presented and discussed by the

Thai Sustainable Fisheries Roundtable members in the search for measures and practical implementation in Thai Marine Fisheries Management.

2. Meeting Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The objectives of the meeting were as follows:

- To present and discuss the findings from the REBYC experiments using 4.0 cm cod end mesh sizes for trawl fishing;
- To make industry representatives more aware of the likely impacts of the new fishery legislation; and
- To discuss other options for the reduction in the capture of juvenile fish from trawl fishing.

The Outcome of the meeting was expected to be as follows:

- Senior businessmen know more about the likely effect on trash fish availability and fish meal production when the new mesh size measures are implemented.

3. Venue and Participants

The meeting was held at the Asia Airport Hotel in Patum Thani province. The agenda is attached here as Annex 1. The total number of participants was 40 including the Private sector (Chareon Phokapant Co, Asian Fish meal Co, Sirisang Arampee Co, Southeast Company), Fishers, Government officials, Meeting Secretariat and Organizers.

4. Summary of meeting outcomes

Mr. Suchart Sangchan, Director of Andaman Sea Fisheries Research & Development Center (Phuket) provided a background of the REBYC-II CTI Project and presented the results of the experiment on enlarged mesh size in the cod-end.

Mrs. Kulapa Boonchuwong, a DOF expert on fisheries economics provided an overview of Thailand's fishmeal production including the strategic management of low-value fish intended for use as fishmeal. In 2014, the total amount of trash fish in Thailand was around 347,566 MT; about 92% of which was caught by trawlers. About 8% came from the neighboring waters of Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia. The price of trash fish was around 7 Baht per kg. Raw material sources to make fishmeal were: trash fish from trawlers (35%), fish carcasses (35%) and tuna processing waste (30%). In 2014 the average fishmeal price was 34.67 Baht per kg. The total number of fishmeal plants in Thailand in 2014 was 86. Factories receiving GMP standard numbered 61, whilst 42 received both GMP and HACCP standards. The total amount of fishmeal exported in 2014 was 175,179 MT of which the destination countries were China (42.4%), Japan (19.5%), Vietnam (15.7%) and Indonesia (7.0%). Imports of fishmeal in 2014 totaled 21,390 MT, from Myanmar (48.7%), Vietnam (37.5%), Peru (2%), Denmark (3.0%) and Norway (1.5%).

Mrs. Boonchuwong discussed the problems that will likely occur when implementing new mesh size regulations, noting that when the landings of trash fish will be reduced, less will be available for fishmeal production. The new IUU restriction measures will also have a negative effect on trawlers: trash fish handling and transportation needs to be improved to maintain better quality and high price. It was also pointed out that recent global economic crisis (fluctuations) have impacted on fish meal exports and imports.

Mrs. Boonchuwong proposed a strategy for trawl fishery management. This included the following points:

- Laws and regulations on trawl cod-end mesh sizes should be enforced strongly;
- Increased areas for nursing grounds should be established;
- Area and seasonal closures should be expanded;
- Fish handling on board, at the pier and on land as well as transportation, should be developed and improved to produce good quality fish at a high price; and
- Other sources of protein, such as soybean, should be considered for use in fishmeal production.

5. Discussion

After Mrs. Boonchuwong's presentation, issues were discussed among the meeting participants. The bullet list below is a summary of the main discussion points:

- The effects from the introduction of enlarged mesh sizes in cod-ends of trawlers are likely to be:
 - Juveniles of economically important fish species will escape capture and true trash fish (mature small sized fish) will still be captured;
 - There will be a short-term reduction in the overall amount of trash fish captured;
 - There should be a slow increase in the size of fish for human consumption.
- Fishers would understand the issues better if they could join in the trawl selectivity experiments with the researchers;
- Fish meal production from trash fish for export to other countries may be more practical than to request for manufacturing certification documentation, such as MSC;
- Imported fishmeal from foreign countries is generally of good quality;
- Some previously used trash fish species e.g. *Sardinella* are now being sold for human consumption;
- Fish meal processors will become illegal if the traceability system cannot be settled for trawlers;
- At present, fish meal processors and fowl meal processors are joining hands to try and settle supply chain issues;
- The Thai Fishmeal Association has requested DOF for research and development in new protein sources to replace trash fish in fish meal production, e.g. soy bean;
- DOF should have a mechanism to integrate links between the agencies concerned and the supply chain;
- The Thai private sectors is trying to establish a new project called "Sustainable fish meal production";
- Data on trash fish are insufficient, imprecise, out of date and rarely exchanged;
- NGOs can play an effective role in establishing networks and monitoring the industry.

Annex 1: Agenda

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| 08.00 - 08.30 | Registration |
| 08.30 - 09.00 | Opening ceremony
Mr. Manoch Roongratri ,
Director of Mar Fish Res and Dev. Division |
| 09.00 - 12.00 | Brief presentation of the REBYC-II CTI project and results on experiments using mesh enlargement
Mr. Suchart Sangchan , Director of Andaman Sea Fisheries Res & Dev Center in Phuket.

Present status of trash fish and fish meal production
Mrs. Kulapa Boonghoowong , Expert on Fisheries Economics.

Round Table Discussion:
“Trawl cod-end mesh size of 4.0 cm, trawl fisheries and bycatch management”
Chairperson: Mr. Somsak Chullasorn , DOF Consultant |
| 13.00 - 16.00 hr | Round Table Discussion: (cont.)
Chairperson: Mr. Somsak Chullasorn , DOF Consultant) |
| 16.00 | Conclusions and closure of the meeting
Mr. Pairochan Saklieng , Expert on Marine Fisheries, DOF |

Annex 3: Figures