

SUSTAINING FOOD SUPPLY FROM INLAND FISHERIES



In 2008, the total fisheries production of the region was 27,260,013 MT, of which 2,381,711 MT came from the inland capture fisheries, accounting for approximately 8.7% of the total production.

Despite low reported figures, the importance of inland fisheries could not be neglected due to its contribution to food security and poverty alleviation for people, particularly the low income group.

The importance of inland fisheries include:

- its potential role in ensuring food security
- its potential in providing direct employment to rural populations through production and indirect employment in processing and trading in fishery products
- its role in providing significant opportunities for integration into rural farming livelihoods
- its capacity to buffer the shortfalls in agricultural production and provide alternative sources of food and income

The nature of inland fisheries in the Southeast Asian region

- small-scale
- multi-species
- multi-gears
- involving large number of fishers which include part-time fishers
- major parts of the production are for household consumption

These make it difficult to collect information on inland fisheries production and its contribution to the region's fish supply.

The importance of inland fisheries had been overlooked by planners and policy makers, as this sub-sector had been given low priority compared to other development sectors, such as

- irrigation and hydro-power generation
- urbanization
- navigation
- wetland conversion for agricultural activities
- deforestation

It is therefore necessary to secure sustainable development and maintain food supply from inland fisheries by

- improving information collection and developing appropriate indicators for sustainable inland fisheries
- maintaining the connectivity of inland fisheries habitats
- alleviating the impacts from construction of water barriers such as weirs, barrages and roads to the migratory inland aquatic species
- supporting responsible inland fishing operations and practices
- implementing appropriate habitat conservation and resources enhancement programs.