Advisory Committee Meeting
for enlargement of the cod-end mesh size of trawlers
(REBYC-II CTI; GCP/RAS/269/GFF)

23 July 2015, Asia Airport Hotel, Patum Thani province, Thailand

Report by

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1. Background to REBYC-II CTI Project

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations ("FAO") and the Department of Fisheries, Thailand, has 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). Thailand by the Department of Fisheries, Marine Fisheries Research and Development Bureau, will implement the project at two sites. Prachuab Kiri Khan and Chumphon is the site where the enlargement experiments of cod-end mesh size for trawl fisheries will be implemented. The Central Gulf Marine Fisheries Research and Development Center (CMDEC), located in Chumphon, will take lead of research on trawl fisheries and enlargement of cod-end mesh size. The second site is in Trad province where the management measures for closed area and closed season will be established to protect fish larvae and spawners. The Eastern Marine Fisheries Research and Development (EMDEC), located in Rayong province, will take lead for the research work.

In this connection, the Marine Fisheries Research Development Division under the DOF would like to present the results of the project studies which are related to the trawl fisheries situation, including the enlargement of trawl cod-end mesh size and fisheries social, economic, law and legal review. The drafted trawl mesh size measure and practical implement for trawl and bycatch management will be presented.

The results of these studies have already been shown to the local stakeholder in Prachaub Kiri Khan and Chumphon provinces. Now, the DOF need wider opinion from local fishers to consult, discuss and find out solutions to the problems related to trawl fisheries and bycatch management. This knowledge and recommendation will be useful for further formulate the trawl fisheries and bycatch management measures, and especially for the enlargement of trawl cod-end mesh.

Specific objectives of the REBYC-II CTI Project in Thailand under the 2nd LOA

1. Consider the drafted measure to enlarge the cod-end mesh size of trawlers
2. Consider the practical way to implement the measure
3. Consider the strategy for bycatch management
4. To agree on measures and send them to the Conservation Committee of DOF for approval.

2. Summary of Advisory Committee Meeting (23rd July 2015).

An Advisory Committee Meeting to discuss the enlargement of cod-end mesh size of trawlers was held on 23 July 2015 at the Asia Airport Hotel, Patum Thani province, Thailand. A total of 70 participants attended the meeting: fishers (46); government officials (14); invited experts (4); and organizers and secretariat staff (6).

The meeting participants exchanged ideas and discussed the results from the trawl experiments using cod-end mesh size of 4.0 cm. This option has been presented and discussed, based on research results, among fishers and private processing agents and government officials in several meetings the project has been conducted and the work is still ongoing on the present year. The results on economic and social study were also discussed and topics such as trash fish production and fishmeal products were introduced to the meeting. Some important points relating to trawl fisheries in the new Fisheries Act were also pointed out.

The participants generally understood and accepted the results from trawl experiment even though there would be some short-term losses when a bigger mesh size is introduced. They in general agreed with the Department of Fisheries (DOF) to use the 4.0 cm for cod-end mesh sizes for otter board and pair trawlers. However there were some participants opposing the idea of enlarged mesh size for all types of fishing gear, especially the *Rastrelliger* bottom gillnet. Another comment was to allow fishers to fish in wide fishing areas and not to force them to concentrate in one fishing area only.

Some participants requested that if the mesh size regulation is implemented, then the active date should be postponed by one year because the present net (old cod-end) can be used for three years after cutting. The fishers would need one year to change from an old net to a new net and so the government should provide some compensation to cover net cutting/mounting costs.

It was noted that the types of fishing boats should be specified to include otter board and pair trawlers that catch only fish and should not be extended to those trawlers that fish for shrimp. In Thailand, most shrimps captured are small sized which are dried before marketing. A 4.0 cm mesh size would allow for many of these to escape and would not be meaningful for shrimp fishers.

In the past DOF did not issue any mesh size regulations for trawlers. However, DOF has issued mesh size regulation for purse seine fishing net (not less than 2.5 cm), anchovy net (not less than 0.6 cm), light luring squid cast net (not less than 3.2 cm); crab net (bottom side net - not less than 2.5”) and short neck clam dredge (not less than 1.2 cm).

Fishmeal producers voiced their concerns that when the mesh regulation comes into action, trash fish quantities will be reduced (at present there are no trash fish coming from Indonesia and Myanmar). They also said that fishmeal used by processors is composed of trash fish (50%), fish skeleton and rotten fish (30%) and tuna processing waste (20%).

Other comments from the meeting included the following:

- The monitoring MCS should be more effective.
- Public announcements should be made to improve understanding among stakeholders and government agencies, at the central and local areas.
- The fishers and fish processors noted that cod-end mesh size could be enlarged to 5.0 cm when stocks have started to recover.
- Under the New Fisheries Act, 2015, the legal measure to cover the Thailand Offshore Fisheries is still not completed. Violators of the law will be imprisoned for up to one year, and will be fined 10,000-100,000 Baht (Section 6).

Conclusions: Mesh size Introduction Management Scheme

The mesh size management scheme was agreed at the Meeting on 23 July 2015.

- The management scheme can either be issued by the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives Ministry or the Provincial Governor.
- The Ministry Notification should include research results, an Action Plan, and approval from the DOF Resource Conservation Committee. Then it will be send to the Cabinet for consideration and approval.
- The Provincial Notification should include the Local Public Hearing together with the result of research work; approval from the Provincial Committee; approval from the Department of Fisheries via the Resource Conservation Committee, and sent to the Cabinet for consideration and approval.
- After the Cabinet has approved the Notification, the Notification will become active 30 days after its announcement.
- When the Notification is active, the action plan will be implemented by concerned agencies e.g. DOF enforcement, marine police, Coastal Marine Protection Center (Navy is a core center), Local Administrative Organization, and Volunteer Groups to monitor the fisheries to be legal.

Annex 1. Supporting Information

1.1. Number of Participants

Total participants 70 (fishers 46, government officials 14, invited experts 4 and organizer and secretariat staff 6).

1.2. Venue

23 July 2015 at Asia Airport Hotel, Patum Thani province.

1.3. Responsible unit

Marine Fisheries Research and Development Division.

1.4. Expected output

- Cod-end mesh size of 4.0 cm for trawlers is accepted by the Advisory Committee,
- Strategy for bycatch management - The Advisory Committee will propose cod-end mesh size of 4.0 cm to the Conservation Committee for law and regulation process in issuing measure

1.5. Budget

Expenses was disbursed from the project "Strategies for trawl fisheries bycatch management", REBYC-II CTI (GCP/RAS/269/GFF) under the second LOA between the Thai DIF and FAO

The total amount of spending was 116,800 Baht (One hundred sixteen thousand and eighty hundred Baht only).

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Annex 2: Agenda

Advisory Committee Meeting:
The enlargement of mesh size cod-end of trawlers
REBYC-II CTI; GCP /RAS/269/GFF)

22-23 July 2015
Asia AirPort Hotel, Patum Thani province

Agenda

22 July 2015

1600-1830 hr.	Registration

23 July 2015

08.30-09.00 hr	Registration
09.00-09.15	Opening (Director of Mar. Fish. Res. and Dev. Division Mr. Manoch Roongratri)
19.15-09.45	Open Discussion (results of the trawl experiments from DOF and social economic studies)
	Chairperson: Marine Fisheries Expert (Mr. Pirochana Saiklieng) Panelists : Researchers:
	Mr. Piyachoke Sinanun; Mr. Wirat Sanitmatjaro; Dr. Sirisuda Chamnongsong
09.45-10.00	Refreshment
10.30-11.30	Open Discussion (continue)
	Results of the trawl experiments from DOF and social economic studies
	Chairperson: Marine Fisheries Expert Mr. Pirochana Saiklieng)
	Panelists : Researchers:
	Mr. Piyachoke Sinanun; Mr. Wirat Sanitmatjaro; Dr. Sirisuda Chamnongsong
11.30-12.00	Strategy for trash fish management
	Slide presentation from MS. Nattaya Srichantue
12.00-13.00	Lunch
13.00-15.00	Discussion; Formulation of mesh size cod-end 4.0 cm for trawl fisheries
	Chairperson: Marine Fisheries Consultant of DOF; Mr. Somsak Chullasorn
	Panelists: President of fish meal Processor (Mr. Sa-ngaunsak Aklavarinchai)
	Secretary of the Thailand Fisheries Association Mr. Kamolsak Lerdpaibul)
	Chumphon Fisheries Provincial Official Mr. Sayan Eaimrod
15. 00-15.15	Refreshment
15.15- 16.00	Short review of some Sections of New Fisheries Act and open discussion
	NTO of the Project (Dr. Mala Supongpan)
16.00-16.15	Conclusion and close of the meeting. Mr. Pirochana Saikleing

Annex 3: Photos

Registration

Opening by the Director,

Mar. Fish .Res. & Dev. Division

Participants

Panel Discussion

Open discussion

Refreshment