

Background

By providing nearly 50 percent of fish consumed globally and creating more than 5 million jobs worldwide, aquaculture increasingly contributes to global food fish supplies and to alleviation of malnutrition, hunger and poverty, especially in developing countries. It has been estimated that to maintain the current global per capita fish consumption of 16.7 kg/year, aquaculture needs to produce more than 78 million tonnes by 2030. This means that 20 years from now, aquaculture will need to produce 27 million tonnes of more fish than the current annual production. This also means that the sector will have to continue its fast growth to sustain the projected demand for aquatic food, whilst maintaining environmental integrity and social responsibility. Emerging issues and other challenges will have to be addressed in a timely manner along the development path as well in order for the industry to fully utilize its potential and contribute to the Millennium Development Goals.

In 1976, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held the first ever global conference on aquaculture in Kyoto, Japan, known as the Kyoto Conference. This Conference looked at a variety of opportunities for aquaculture development, including technology, science, networking, and manpower and institutional strengthening. It triggered the recognition of aquaculture into higher prominence. Almost 25 years later, in 2000, the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia and the Pacific (NACA) and FAO along with the Thai Department of Fisheries organized the “Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium”, in Bangkok, Thailand. Like the Kyoto Conference, the Bangkok Millennium Conference reflected on the 25 years of aquaculture development globally, and examined the role aquaculture played and will play in the overall development context. The Bangkok Millennium Conference resulted in a global consensus on the “Bangkok Declaration and Strategy for Aquaculture Development” (Bangkok Declaration), a document which provided the much needed technical and political vision and guidance for the sustainable development of the sector.

It has been a decade since the Bangkok Millennium Conference was concluded. With aquaculture now recognized as *the emerging agriculture, the fastest food producing sector* and *the future of fisheries*, it is timely to evaluate where the sector stands today, how far it had travelled since 2000, and what challenges and opportunities there are for the various stakeholders to consider collectively in their common quest for its sustainable development.

Cognizant of the guidance from the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the 1996 FAO World Food Summit and the above in mind, FAO, NACA and the Kingdom of Thailand endeavour to hold the “Global Conference on Aquaculture 2010”. The Conference will be held from 9 to 12 June 2010 and back-to-back with the 5th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. The latter, which will also be hosted by the Royal Thai Government, will be held just after the Conference, from 14 to 18 June 2010. This arrangement will enable a wider participation of key policy decision makers in aquaculture development and management.

With a broad-based participation and a wide-ranging involvement of stakeholders that this conference and the events leading up to it have provided in its development, a final outcome of the conference - the Consensus and Strategy document - will provide critical guidance for everyone with an interest in aquaculture – planners, investors, donors, technical assistance agencies, producers, civic organizations, community advocacy groups, and consumers – in their common efforts to attain the envisioned state of sustainable aquaculture development.

Purpose

The objectives of the Conference are to:

- review the present status and trends in aquaculture development including an evaluation of the successes and failures in implementing the Bangkok Declaration and Strategy;
- identify and address emerging issues in aquaculture development;

- assess opportunities and challenges for future aquaculture development; and
- build consensus on the way forward to advance the agenda of aquaculture as a global, sustainable and competitive sector.

Participation

Stakeholders interested in aquaculture development and management including the public sector, private industry, academia, development partners, civil society, etc. are cordially invited to participate in this global conference.

Process

The organization of this four-day global conference will be driven by different committees (i.e. an International Organizing Committee, an International Programme Committee, a Local Organizing Committee, a Conference Consensus and Strategy Drafting Committee and a Conference Secretariat).

The Conference follows a format that is similar to the 2000 Bangkok Millennium Conference's. It consists of introductory *Plenary Keynote Presentations* and *Invited Guest Lectures*. *Plenary Keynote Presentations* will draw a scenario of the state and prospects of aquaculture and requirements for its development while *Invited Guest Lectures* will address salient issues of aquaculture. The plenary presentations will set the scene for the subsequent two parallel sessions tackling thematic areas that will form the basis for achieving the objectives of the conference. The parallel sessions will present the *Thematic Reviews* to be followed by a panel of expert discussions, and will develop conclusions and recommendations pertaining to the themes discussed that will be fed into the consensus and strategy document. A *Concluding Plenary Session* will present a Draft Consensus and Strategy document for discussion and adoption, in principle.

Pre-conference activities include preparation of six regional reviews and a global synthesis on aquaculture development status and trends in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East and North America. Each of these reviews will cover major aspects of aquaculture development and management (e.g. policy, planning and governance; food security and socio-economics; resources utilization and conservation; marketing and trade; capacity building and knowledge sharing; emerging issues; opportunities and challenges for future aquaculture development. Every attempt will be made to cover as many relevant issues as possible within the above major themes.

A Poster Session will be incorporated in the conference programme, which will allow individual participants to present technical and experience papers. Abstracts of these papers will be made available to the Chairpersons of thematic sessions as appropriate, and will eventually be published.

The Global Conference on Aquaculture 2010 uses a unique format. It draws from lessons learned from the previous 2000 Bangkok Millennium Conference, which will enable a consensus building on the strategy for future aquaculture development and management. The four-day conference will consist of few parallel sessions; each session logically following from the previous one and all thematic sessions covering both policy and technical issues. This format will enable a deliberate, participatory and iterative process that allows conference participants ample opportunity to contribute to the various technical sessions. The format is also designed to promote greater interaction and wider participation in the discussion of issues associated with the biological, technological, social, economic, environmental, policy, legal and other aspects of the development of aquaculture. A wide cross-section involvement of the stakeholders of aquaculture development will be sought before, during, and even after this conference.

Products

The major outcomes of the conference will facilitate the sustainable development of aquaculture in the long-term.

A first major outcome of the conference will be a "Consensus and Strategy for Aquaculture Development" document. This document will encapsulate consensus, in principle, of the way forward for sustainable development and management of aquaculture as well as a strategy, which provides guidance on broad and specific goals, and describe the agreed upon goals and the desired ways to achieve them.

A second major output of the conference is a technical proceedings document which will contain the plenary presentations, guest lectures and regional and thematic reviews presented during the conference. These two documentation outputs will be published after the conference.

A Conference Programme containing a synopsis of the keynote and invited guest lectures, regional and thematic reviews and a Book of Abstracts for the poster presentations will be distributed during the conference.