

## **Thailand's Artisanal Marine Fisheries Moves Towards Sustainable Management**

Thailand has a total coastline of 3,151.13 kilometers, which includes 22 provinces in the Gulf of Thailand and in the Andaman Sea, each with a coastline of 2,039.78 kilometers and 1,111.35 kilometers, respectively. As a result, marine fishing has played an important role in fishing communities in terms of food security, income generation, and poverty alleviation. Artisanal fishing is subsistence fishing or small-scale fishing, generally, with a small-size fishing vessel, according to the Royal Ordinance on Fisheries, 2015, artisanal fishing is fishing operations in coastal seas in which a fishing vessel is used or in which fishing gear is used without a fishing vessel, but in any case, the vessel must be less than 10 GT.

Artisanal fisheries' capture volume accounts for 11% of overall marine and freshwater fish production. According to statistics, the total capture volume from artisanal fisheries in 2021 was 270,457.00 tons, with the catch from the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea for 166,666.93 tons (61.62%) and 103,790.84 tons (38.38%), respectively.

The fish group had the biggest capture of 129,999.93 tons, accounting for 48.06% of all aquatic animals caught from artisanal fisheries. The crab group came in second with capture of 38,721.28 tons, accounting for 14.32% of all aquatic animals caught in artisanal fisheries, the shrimp group accounted for 38,338.79 tons (14.18%), other aquatic animals 33,767.24 tons (12.49%), squid group 24,491.35 tons (9.06%), and shellfish group 5,139.06 tons (1.90%).

Thailand reformed its fisheries by enacting the Royal Ordinance on Fisheries, 2015 and its amendments, 2017 with the goal of enabling Thai fisheries laws to comply with the current situation of artisanal and commercial fisheries, regulating fishing operations in Thai waters to prevent, deter, and eliminate IUU fishing, maintaining aquatic animal resources as a sustainable food source for humans, and fostering the environment to remain healthy in accordance with the rules, regulations, and measures recognized at the international level, including protecting the welfare of the vessel's crew and preventing illegal labor in the fisheries sector. After the Royal Ordinance entered into force in 2015, commercial fishing vessels were first systematically regulated, starting from the improvement of the commercial fishing vessel registration system, issuance of commercial fishing licenses, control and monitoring of commercial fishing, and law enforcement.

The Marine Department conducted a survey on artisanal fishing vessels in 2022, registered and marked them to incorporate them into the vessel registration system, and fishery resources and fishing fleet management system. In December 2022, Thailand has 10,086 commercial fishing vessels registered with the Marine Department with 53,455 registered artisanal fishing vessels; of these, 37,948 are less than 3 GT, 15,289 are between 3 and 10 GT, and 218 are between 10 and 15 GT authorized to operate artisanal fishing under Section 174 of the Fisheries Laws. The Fisheries Development in Thai Waters Policy was developed under the Royal Ordinance on Fisheries based on the fish stock and fishing capacity and taking into consideration of the reference point. Thailand uses the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) as a reference point in determining the Total Allowable Catch (TAC). In the

fisheries annual of 2022, the TAC is set at 95% of MSY, and 18.32% of TAC is allocated for artisanal fisheries.

For the management of fisheries resources in Thai waters to be effective, accurate, and trustworthy scientific data must be used to calculate the MSY and TAC for the restoration, conservation, and sustainable use of fisheries resources. Nevertheless, Thailand currently does not have exhaustive information on the artisanal fisheries sector; catch, fishing vessels, and gears of the artisanal fisheries sector.

As a result, in the 2023 fiscal year, the Department of Fisheries considers establishing a concrete marine artisanal fisheries management system, starting from drafting the guidelines for issuing artisanal fisheries licenses in the 2023-2024 fishing year, in collaboration with the Marine Department, the Federation of Thai Fisherfolk Associations, the Thai Sea Watch Association, the Local Fishing Community Organization, the Artisanal Fisheries Association, the Artisanal Fisheries Group, the Fisher Folk Network in the 22 coastal provinces, academics, and the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), prescribing the procedures of application for artisanal fisheries license, determining the fishing area for artisanal fisheries in the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea, group of aquatic animals, fishing gear and fishing vessel's size that will be authorized to operate artisanal fishing. The key principle used to draft the guidelines is that the license must be granted to the fishing vessel of 3 GT but not over 10 GT, and the fishing vessel of 10 GT but not over 15 GT that is granted the license under section 74, the use of no more than 2-3 fishing gears (excluded all kind of hooks). The 11 permitted fishing gears include nets, pots, hooks and lines, frog crab traps, etc.

However, the Department of Fisheries is currently soliciting ideas and comments from all stakeholders before presenting the guidelines for consideration to the National Fisheries Policy Committee.

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