

**Monthly Report on Trade Issues in Asia  
Pacific**

**October 2005**

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## **Indian Fishermen Protest Globalization**

[India, fisherfolk, globalization, fishery trade]

National protests or “mass mobilization events” have been called for in India on 21 November (World Fisheries Day) to protest the globalization of the Indian fishery industry. These come as criticisms continue that the proposed Indian Aquaculture Authority Act ignores the right of fish workers. In addition, the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) stated that it planned a protest event on 24 October to add its voice to the anti-globalization protests. The protest will be part of a campaign in all the coastal states which is planned to lead towards a national mass mobilization against globalization on 21 November.

The protest follows a call for a program of protests made at the recent NFF meeting in Chennai which was attended by 45 top leaders of the fishing community. At this meeting, the NFF called for amendments to the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act of 2005 and for further dialogue with fishing communities to be held before passing the legislation. The meeting stated that the act ignores the rights and aspirations of fishworkers and other coastal communities, threatening their livelihoods by allowing aquaculture farms to be introduced in any coastal areas and therefore acting in violation of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification. Fishing community leaders have urged the government to amend the Act. The NFF is also disappointed that recommendations it has made have not been incorporated in the Comprehensive Marine Fishing Policy.

The NFF also continues to condemn the attempt to bring in foreign fishing vessels under the flag of Indian ownership to exploit deep sea fisheries. They have urged the government to revamp its policy in this matter, adding that India had lost the opportunity to defend the labor rights of its fishermen, who form the second largest fishing population in the world.

(Source: Katsuri & Sons Ltd (KSL), The Hindu, September 24, 2005)

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## **Philippines Ratifies Convention on Migratory Fish Species**

[Philippines, fisheries, migratory species]

The Philippine Senate recently ratified the Multilateral High Level Convention (MHLC) on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stock in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. The MHLC is an agreement among over 20 Pacific and European countries intending to efficiently manage and conserve the Pacific Ocean’s tuna resources. With this agreement comes full membership of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the regional body that manages tuna resources in the Pacific Ocean west of 150° W, a resource estimated to be worth US\$ 3 billion. The Commission will determine the total allowable catch, allocate quotas to member countries and regulate fishing methods. Of the three tropical tuna species, bigeye and yellowfin are currently fished at or above maximum sustainable yield. Only skipjack tuna fisheries remain below its maximum sustainable yield. The Philippines’ major commitments to the MHLC are to:

- Prevent or eliminate over-fishing in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO),

- the world's primary tuna fishing grounds
- Collect and provide accurate data on its total fish catches, and
- Assess the impact of its fishing activities on relevant fish stocks.

(Source: Onefish.org www.onefish.org, October 2005; Sun Star Zamboanga, August 2005)

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### **Fish Presents Opportunity for Rural Development and Job Creation**

[Asia, Africa, India, livelihoods, aquatic resources management]

Although fish may be one of the most internationally traded commodities, governments in Asia and Africa are not fully exploiting the opportunity this presents with respect to rural development and job generation, according to Dr M Vijay Gupta, recipient of the recent 2005 World Food Prize, in his lecture "Delivering the Millennium Lecture, Fish For All". Dr Gupta added that fish plays a vital role in providing food and nutrition security to poor people, especially in developing countries. Unfortunately fish farming is not getting enough attention from planners and bureaucrats and the investments made to improve production in India are described as negligible.

The global fish trade was worth some US\$ 63 billion in 2003, with Asian countries accounting for US\$ 20 billion of this. Over 40% of this fish production is traded across borders and exports of fish and related products exceed that of meat, dairy, cereals, sugar and coffee. Asian countries dominate the trade in fish and of the 104 million tons produced in 2003 over 63% of it was from Asia, which also accounts for 90% of aquaculture production. Therefore, fish culture is based almost entirely in rural areas and concentrated in developing countries. Thus its trade presents an opportunity to help communities in these areas. Aquaculture now accounts for about 35% of the entire production as wild catches fall. Therefore aquaculture is set to rise. Once a leader in this field of food production, India has now been joined by smaller countries such as Thailand and Vietnam. These two now export over US\$ 2.5 billion worth of fish products while India's exports are estimated at about US\$ 1.5 billion.

#### *Rice-fish Combination*

Mr Gupta narrated his own experience in Bangladesh where farmers succeeded in increasing their rice production by combining it with fish farming. For them, he advocated low cost, low risk and sustainable technology for fish farming. The rice-fish combination not only improved their incomes but also gave them nutrition security, as fish was the major source of animal protein. Further, it reduced pesticide consumption by over 80%, which in turn improved the environment. If there was a crop failure it was compensated by income from fish farming. In Bangladesh the total fish production in 1960 was 65,000 tons, which has increased to 80,000 tons today. Again in Bangladesh, many rural women took to fishing, which helped them supplement their family income and thereby their overall economic situation.

Apart from improving the income of families, fish farming could bring in substantial foreign exchange to developing countries. Globally, trade worth about US\$ 63 billion was being transacted every year, which could be tapped by developing countries. In Tamil Nadu, he said, on the advice of M S Swaminathan he visited Nagapattinam a few days before to help local fishermen improve their income. He said non-governmental groups and self-help groups could be actively involved in disseminating the latest technologies to rural people as they had good grassroots-level contacts. Later, giving a lecture on "Fish for All" on behalf of the Hindu Media

Resource Centre and the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Mr Gupta said fish contributed 40-50% of animal protein in Asia. It could provide food and nutrition security to poor people if they had an access to it, he said.

Dr Gupta added that the key to exploiting aquaculture for rural development lay in community participation, the diversification of numbers of species cultured, the integration of aquaculture with other farming systems, improved breeds of fish and the efficient marketing of fisheries products. Women will play a central role and were described as better fish farmers than men with over 60% of the fish farmers in Bangladesh being women.

(Source: Katsuri & Sons Ltd (KSL), The Hindu, Business Line, September 28, 2005)

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