

**THE BANGKOK CONFERENCE**

# **FISHERIES TRENDS AND THE FUTURE OF FISH WORKERS**

In continuation of the Lisbon Symposium, which centred around environmental issues and Euro-African relations (see article on p.4), the ICSF is organising another international exchange program, focusing other issues bearing upon the future of fishworkers: global fisheries trends.

John Kurien gives below an outline of the main points of this Conference to be held in Bangkok (Thailand) in January 1990, where scientists, social activists and fisheries policy makers will encounter delegates of fishworker's organisations.

The global fisheries scenario has been undergoing rapid changes in the decade of the eighties. Most maritime countries extended their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) by the end of the seventies and this was legalised with the signing of the Law of the Sea Treaty in 1982. As a result the continental shelf became a mosaic of national territorial waters. Maritime countries thus acquired new rights and responsibilities for the management and development of their fishery resources.

## **EVALUATING THE EVOLUTIONS**

In some areas fishing by distant water fleets of both industrialised and developing countries was affected by the promulgation of FEZ's. A potentially adverse situation for these countries was quickly rectified by a variety of responses. The most important of these were the new forms of fishing agreements signed with countries which had fishery resources but not the potential to make capital investments. Trade in fishery commodities between developing and developed countries also increased considerably. Aquaculture in the near shore areas of many developing maritime countries (and a few developed countries) registered a phenomenal growth concentrating on the 'luxury species' like prawns, salmon and trout.

External assistance to fisheries projects increased substantially. International banks and national aid agencies of the developed countries played an important role in this. The MO's 1984 World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development raised some hope that small-scale fisheries would receive more financial resources. This remained an unfulfilled prospect. In fact the bulk of the international aid still went into the more capital intensive large-scale fishery

which employs only one-tenth of the world's fishermen. A considerable amount is also flowing into finance the aquaculture projects. The small-scale fishworkers and their families—estimated to count at least 60 million persons—received external assistance of about one US dollar per capita. Though a small and disproportionate share, it went to finance artifacts like outboard engines, synthetic fishing gear - most of which were supplied by private companies in the industrialised countries.

An assessment of these trends in global fisheries with particular reference to their impact on the future of fishworkers is an important task to be undertaken.

In the light of this, the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) is planning to organise an international conference on the theme: GLOBAL FISHERIES TRENDS AND THE FUTURE OF FISH WORKERS

This conference will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from January 22-27, 1990. It will be co-hosted by the Kasetsart University, Bangkok. The conference will bring together fishworkers, scientists, social activists and fishery policy makers from all over the globe to discuss these issues.

## **FISH TRADE AND AQUACULTURE**

The conference programme is structured so as to provide a balanced view of the trends in the fisheries sector from the perspective of scientists, policy makers and the fishworkers.

There will be two keynote addresses on the theme of the conference. One will be presented by a First World social scientist and the other by a Third World fishworker. The main issues highlighted by the speakers will be discussed in workshop sessions.

Two important trends in the fisheries sector which will be considered in greater detail are:

- the changing character and composition of global fish trade
- the impact of the phenomenal growth in aquaculture

Two presentations will have specific regional focus. They will deal with:

- the impact of motorisation of fishing crafts on the small-scale fishing communities (West Africa)
- the impact of fishing legislations and conflicts in the coastal waters on small-scale fishermen (Asia)

Apart from these "input sessions", there will be a series of presentations made by Third World fishworkers. These will deal exclusively with the growth

and dynamics of their organisations. They will discuss the strategies evolved by them to respond to the various trends in the fisheries sectors in their respective countries. The constraints they have to face in their organisational tasks will also be a subject of analysis. During the course of the conference there will be audio-visual presentations by the fishworkers dealing with a variety of issues concerning their lives and struggles.

A full day will be devoted to an exposure programme in Thailand which will focus on the various types/sizes of aquaculture projects. Thailand is one of the most technologically advanced countries in this field and an initial assessment of the socio-economic potentials and risks of aquaculture as well as its ecological consequences can be made through this exposure.

The last half day of the conference will be devoted to formulation of the recommendations and conclusions arising out of the various forms of interactions.

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*Note: Titles and sub-titles are added by the editor.*

