

Targetting European inland fisheries and aquaculture institutions for the Aquatic Commons

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Abstract: FAO is working with IAMSILIC to develop the Aquatic Commons, which will facilitate the exchange of scientific research related to the marine/aquatic environments by providing a Web accessible repository for digital documents. FAO is particularly concerned with information related to the management of fisheries and aquaculture, which is usually published as grey literature and often difficult to obtain. We will be promoting the Aquatic Commons in Europe via FAO related bodies and networks, including the European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (EIFAC) and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Central-Eastern Europe (NACEE). This poster describes in more detail the links between the institutions, the Aquatic Commons and the role of information in support of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The Aquatic Commons: the issues for FAO

Through its programmes, field projects, the library, and information systems such as ASFA, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department has played a key role in both the production and the dissemination of what we all know as 'grey literature'. One of the characteristics of the literature of fisheries and aquaculture – in particular the practical and management rather than the scientific aspects – is that it does not easily find its way into commercial journals. The results of research and the development lessons learned are often lost because of inadequate opportunities to publish, especially but not only in developing and ECET countries. Capturing the information that has been published has never been totally effective and much still needs to be done to improve dissemination and the sharing of information, as well as to ensure its preservation for future generations.

The digitization of information and its availability via the Internet offer enormous potential for improved access and dissemination. However, it is important that the information generated in developing and ECET countries is integrated into the mainstream of fisheries and aquaculture publications – and that the information professionals in those countries participate fully in the integration. Improved sharing of information will facilitate better use and validation of research results and avoid costly and wasteful duplication of effort.

The Aquatic Commons is seen as an opportunity to achieve the improved capture, dissemination and preservation of fisheries and aquaculture information based on the principles of equal ownership, resource sharing and open access. Linking to full text grey literature by major databases such as ASFA and ABAFR will provide greatly enhanced access to this invaluable information for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Information to support implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

In order to understand more clearly the scope of the information needed for fisheries and aquaculture management, an FAO study¹ was carried out in 2004 to assess the nature of the information used and produced by selected specialists. The surveys, case studies, citation analysis and literature review highlighted the breadth of subjects required, the historic depth of relevant information, the scale of information from local to global, and the diversity of information sources. Given this complexity, it is not surprising that a major effort is required to obtain the best information upon which to base decisions and policy. The lack of global information resources in

¹ Webster, J.G. and J. Collins. (2005). Fisheries information in developing countries: support to the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. FAO Fisheries Circular, No. 1006. Rome (available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5847e/y5847e00.htm>)

developing countries presents significant, but not insurmountable, challenges and the study proposes strategies to help meet them.

The 31st Annual Conference of IAMSILIC, hosted by FAO in October 2005, provided an opportunity for both organizations to discuss information resource sharing and networking as the most cost-effective means of meeting information needs². One issue that emerged from this forum was that few organizations have a mandate that permits them to extend their library and information services beyond their own defined community. There is an obvious need to do so, especially given recent trends towards the decentralization of fisheries management or at least some form of community participation in management. Stakeholders at the local level have limited access to information and their needs should also be understood and met.

The 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries provides a voluntary policy framework for the sustainable and responsible management of fisheries and aquaculture. The FAO FishCode Programme is supporting various information initiatives in order to remove one of the major constraints to implementation of the Code, i.e. access to timely and accurate information.

European inland fisheries and aquaculture networks

We have taken the opportunity of this EURASILIC Conference to concentrate our awareness raising efforts with the European fisheries commissions and networks that are closely related to FAO.

The European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (EIFAC) and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Central and Eastern Europe (NACEE) have been circulated with details of the EURASILIC Conference as well as the aims of the Aquatic Commons.

EIFAC (<http://www.fao.org/fi/body/eifac/eifac.asp>) was founded in 1957 as the only international forum for collaboration and information exchange among European countries and for advice to member Governments on the management of inland fisheries and aquaculture. It currently has 34 members and regularly works with scientists from North America, Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus. The Commission has produced numerous publications on topics within its competence, in addition to its Reports, Technical and Occasional Papers.

NACEE (<http://www.agrowebcee.net/subnetwork/nacee/>) was formally established in 2004 and links 38 institutions in 15 member countries. Among its main aims are: the exchange of information among members within the region; to facilitate the transfer of information relevant to aquaculture development; the exchange of scientists and to initiate joint research and training programs.

Freshwater fisheries and aquaculture are an important source of food and revenue. Freshwater fisheries capture in Europe was 360.000 tons in 2005. While aquaculture production increased from 1.6 to 2.5 million tons between 1995 and 2005 - in terms of value an increase from 4 to almost 7 million US dollar.

A brief analysis of ASFA to characterize the literature on aquaculture and inland fisheries of these 36 countries retrieves about 4,000 references, of which 20% are in peer reviewed journals. If we search ASFA for freshwater fisheries and aquaculture and the author affiliations of the fifteen NACEE member countries, we find 670 references of which only 18% are from peer reviewed journals. Of course we have to be careful about the terminology and who classifies a journal as peer-reviewed, but in general a large proportion of the literature can be classified as 'grey' in terms of it being difficult to obtain. What is of even more interest is to discover the publications which are not being captured by ASFA and other international databases.

National, regional and international partnerships are needed to facilitate the sharing of information. We will be working with other FAO bodies such as the Committee for Inland Fisheries of Africa (CIFA) and the Commission for Inland Fisheries of Latin America (COPESCAL). It is also hoped that as well as promoting the Aquatic Commons, we will also increase the membership of inland fisheries and aquaculture institutions in IAMSILIC.

² IAMSILIC. 2006. Information for responsible fisheries: libraries as mediators. Proceedings of the 31st Annual IAMSILIC Conference, Rome, 10–14 October 2005. Fort Pierce, Florida, USA.