

**AGINFONET-SEA: A Resource for Fisheries Literature**

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Introduction

In the six years since the Seminar on Fisheries Information Science in Southeast Asia held from 16-20 August 1982, the Agricultural Information Bank for Asia or AIBA has undergone significant changes in terms of structure and functions, which will be reported on in this brief paper. The 1982 seminar, which was jointly sponsored by the SEAFDEC Secretariat and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada, brought together the existing fisheries information systems in the region at the time, and sought to see how all these could share resources and thereby avoid costly duplication of effort.

It is indeed heartening to see that in the interim, national fisheries information systems have been developed and made operational. This attests to the key role that information gathering and disseminating activities play in development programs on this important commodity.

Restructuring of the AIBA Network

In 1984, the Governing Board of the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), AIBA's present institution, decided to limit the membership of the AIBA network from eight to five, namely,

Malaysia. Thailand. Singapore. Indonesia and the Philippines. This was for reasons of manageability and financial constraints, inasmuch as IDRC funding for the project had ceased by that time. It was felt that limited resources had best be concentrated on the five member countries of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO).

Then in 1986, SEARCA requested for an external evaluation of the AIBA project, to which IDRC responded. One of the most significant results of the evaluation study was the restructuring of AIBA from a centrally directed network to one which is non-directed. This is because the national participating nodes have developed to such an extent that they no longer need as much outside help as they did in the early years of the network's development.

The new network that evolved was called AGINFONET-SEA (Agricultural Information Network for Southeast Asia), with AIBA now just a member of it rather than its central node. AIBA's functions vis-a-vis the other member countries remains those of coordinator, provision of training in information handling, and provision of information services, but with the last two receiving more emphasis than the first one.

The implications of this new configuration are significant on two counts: (1) AIBA now has a freer hand in pursuing an independent path of development; and (2) it exhibits the degree of maturity now attained by its member countries in the bibliographic control of their agricultural literature.

## The AGRIASIA and CARIS-SEA Databases

The AGRIASIA database is composed of the agricultural scientific literature of the five member countries from 1975 to the present. It has grown to 78,513 records as of January 1989. Of this, 5,473 records are on fisheries, or 6% of the database. Outputs from the database are available in printed format which comes out quarterly, in magnetic tape, or in floppy diskettes. It can also be searched online, although not yet by remote users.

For its part, our CARIS-SEA database is a small file, composed only of 7,950 entries of on-going research in the region covering the years 1987 and 1988. Of this, 550 are on fisheries, or 6%. This is because once a research project or program is completed it would automatically be merged with the AGRIASIA file. This database is also searchable online, and updates are published annually in printed form.

## Suggestions for Possible Linkages

How can the resources of AIBA and AGINFONET-SEA be made use of by users of fisheries literature in the region? The following are some ways by which meaningful linkages could be achieved:

1. Literature Searching and Document Delivery - since AGINFONET-SEA catches fisheries literature as part of its coverage of the broad field of agriculture, the fisheries information systems in the countries of Southeast Asia may wish to search the AGRIASIA and

CARIS-SEA databases through the following national focal points of the network in their own countries: Kasetsart University Library in Bangkok for Thailand; the National Library for the Agricultural Sciences in Bogor for Indonesia; National University of Singapore Library for Singapore; Universiti Pertanian Malaysia and Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute, both in Serdang, for Malaysia; and the University of the Philippines at Los Baños and the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD), both in Los Baños, Laguna for the Philippines.

The former plan of AIBA to publish annual updates of our Fisheries Bibliography (published 1982) was abandoned in view of the continued strengthening of the fisheries information programs in each of the Southeast Asian countries as backstopped by SEAFDEC's initiatives. We still maintain, as we did then, that where resources are scarce (as they are in our region), wasteful duplication of effort has no place.

Access to copies of documents found through searches of our databases can also be greatly facilitated through the participating countries of AGINFONET-SEA. Because this is an important companion service to literature searching, our national centers strive to have all copies of documents they enter into

AGRIASIA available in their library collections.

2. **Microfiche Service** - this is another avenue through which our information network can be availed of by national and regional fisheries information systems. Microfiche offers a cheap means of document delivery, and for this reason, some of our clients (the International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management or ICLARM) had their publications and other outputs microfiched by us. Aside from us at AIBA, each of our participating countries have fully equipped microfiching libraries with trained technicians to handle requests for microfiching.

3. **Training** - this is a growing concern of AIBA and AGINFONET-SEA, as we are increasingly being tapped for training in the more advanced aspects of information handling. Again, this is an important avenue for linkages with us. For this year alone, for instance, AIBA's training program is on the following:

- Micro CDS-ISIS (Version 1), in May and September
- Management of Information Centers
- Training of Users of Scientific Agricultural Literature
- Training on Indexing and Abstracting
- Desktop Publishing together with applications software like Pagemaker and Ventura