

Regional workshop on
**WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies
in Support of its Implementation**

15-16 May 2025
Fortune Beach Resort, Chennai



Hosted By



सत्यमेव जयते
**DEPARTMENT OF
FISHERIES**

Background

According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture Report (SOFIA report), 38% of fish stocks worldwide are exploited beyond sustainable levels. Research has found that governments are spending \$22 billion annually on subsidies that drive overfishing. These subsidies mainly benefit industrial fishing fleets by artificially lowering the costs of fishing, such as fuel and vessel construction costs, enabling them to fish farther out to sea and for longer periods.

In June 2022, the World Trade Organization (WTO) concluded its 12th Ministerial Conference by adopting the landmark WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. The agreement prohibits subsidies that support (1) illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, (2) the fishing of overfished stocks for which no rebuilding measures are in place, and (3) the fishing of unmanaged stocks on the high seas. To date, 97 WTO members have ratified the 2022 Agreement, of the 111 members that are needed for the agreement to enter into force. WTO negotiations are also still ongoing on unresolved issues, including rules to curb subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity more broadly.

The rationalization and better alignment of fisheries subsidies with sustainability objectives is an important topic in international discussions on the future of fisheries and global sustainable development frameworks, in particular SDG target 14.6. The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, concluded in June 2022, represents a significant milestone in global efforts to promote sustainable fishing practices by curbing harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing and the depletion of marine resources.

However, there are also important questions about the practicalities of implementing these new rules, the support options available to developing countries with limited resources, and the way in which the agreement may affect small-scale fishers who rely on subsidies for their livelihoods and food security. This debate is particularly pertinent for countries bordering the Bay of Bengal and South East Asian countries, where fisheries play a crucial role in livelihoods, food security, and economic development. Effective implementation of this agreement, while addressing the concerns of developing nations, is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of our shared marine resources.

Purpose

This workshop aims to bring together trade and fisheries government officials from member States of the Bay of Bengal Programme and other South and Southeast Asian countries, policy experts, and representatives from relevant stakeholder groups to provide a platform for dialogue on the 2022 WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, its approaching entry into force, and tools to support its implementation.

The workshop will also provide an opportunity for governments from the Bay of Bengal region and neighboring countries to update each other and exchange perspectives on their domestic situation with regards to acceptance of the agreement and implementation preparation, including expected technical assistance needs.

The workshop is organized to assist in national ratification determinations and implementation preparation ahead of the UN Ocean Conference in June 2025.



The Workshop participants will be able to:

- **examine** the 2022 agreement's rules;
- **appreciate** the practical implications of the rules;
- **share** experiences with other countries in the region;
- **understand** the tools that are available to support developing country WTO members in their implementation efforts;
- **know** the WTO Fish Fund, a financing mechanism established to provide assistance for implementation to developing country members;
- **explore** the self-assessment tool developed by IISD to determine in practical terms what changes are needed domestically to comply with the agreement, and identify where assistance may be needed.



Resource persons

The resource persons would include experts from:

- Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
- Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO)
- RISE UP

Participants

- Countries: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Malaysia, Thailand.
- Three Government officials from the ministry or department of fisheries and aquatic resources, or other relevant ministries or departments dealing with WTO issues, such as those in charge of commerce, trade, finance, and external affairs.
- Officials with prior knowledge of the WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies or those who participated in its negotiations.

The organizers will cover travel and accommodation costs for the participants.



Day 1: 15 May 2025

Programme

Time	Session	Speaker
0830-0900	Registration	
0900-1000	Opening of the Workshop	
1000-1030	Group Photo & Coffee Break	
1030-1130	Session 1: Fisheries Subsidies and Sustainability: What is at Stake? Moderator: Pattaratjit Kaewnuratchadasorn, <i>Senior Policy Officer, SEAFDEC</i>	
1030-1100	Lead Presentation	Hussain Sinan <i>Director General (Fisheries), MoFOR, Maldives</i>
1100-1130	Open Discussion and Q & A	
1130-1300	Session 2: The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies: An overview Moderator: Tristan Irschlinger, <i>Senior Policy Advisor, IISD</i>	
1130-1215	Lead Presentation	Andrea Mastromatteo <i>Director, Rules Division, WTO</i>
1215-1300	Open Discussion and Q & A	
1300-1400	Lunch Break	
1400-1530	Session 3: Shedding Light on the Rules in the Regional Context: What is the Current Situation? Moderator: Sivaja Nair, <i>Programme Manager, Rise Up</i>	
1400-1430	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (Article 3)	Rajdeep Mukherjee <i>Policy Analyst, BOBP-IGO</i>
1430-1500	Overfished Stocks (Article 4) and Unregulated High Seas (Article 5)	Rishi Sharma <i>Senior Fishery Officer FAO-RAP, Bangkok</i>
1500-1530	Open Discussion and Q & A	
1530-1545	Coffee Break	
1545-1645	Session 4: The Benefits, Practicalities and Challenges of Implementation Moderator: P. Krishnan, <i>Director, BOBP-IGO</i>	
1545-1605	From a Government and Policy Perspective	A. Antony Xavier <i>GM, TNFDC, GoTN & Ex-FDC, DoF, GoI</i>
1605-1625	From a Small-scale Fisheries Perspective	Sebastian Mathew <i>Senior Adviser, ICSF</i>
1625-1645	Open Discussion and Q & A	
1645-1730	Group Discussion & Reflections	

1830-2100 hrs

CULTURAL & NETWORKING DINNER

Traditional Indian dances accompanied by light music showcasing India's rich cultural heritage followed by dinner.



Day 2: 16 May 2025

Time	Session	Speaker
0930-1030	Session 5: Support Mechanisms and Tools for Implementation Moderator: Hussain Sinan, <i>DG-Fisheries, MoFOR, Maldives</i>	
0930-0950	The WTO Fish Fund: Financial Assistance for Implementation	Jonathan Werner <i>Manager, WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism</i>
0950-1010	IISD's Self-assessment Tool for the Implementation of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies	Tristan Irschlinger <i>Senior Policy Advisor, Fisheries Subsidies, IISD</i>
1010-1030	Open Discussion and Q & A	
1030-1100	Coffee Break	
1100-1230	Session 6: The Way Forward in the Region: Prospects for Acceptance of the Agreement and Expected Assistance Needs for Implementation Moderator: P.Krishnan, <i>Director, BOBP-IGO</i>	
1100-1200	Country Presentations (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand)	Heads of Country Delegations
1200-1230	Open Discussion and Q & A	
1230-1300	Wrap-up and Concluding Remarks	

Option 1

DAKSHINACHITRA

DakshinaChitra is a vibrant cross-cultural living museum that celebrates the art, architecture, crafts, lifestyles, and performing arts of South India. Located along the scenic East Coast Road at Muttukadu, Tamil Nadu, it overlooks the Bay of Bengal. The museum features 18 authentically reconstructed heritage homes, each representing the traditional architecture of different South Indian communities. These homes are complemented by contextual exhibitions, live craft demonstrations, and cultural performances that bring history and traditions to life. A hub of learning and cultural exchange, DakshinaChitra offers a unique and immersive experience for visitors to explore the rich and diverse heritage of South India.



Option 2

VGP MARINE KINGDOM



VGP Marine Kingdom in Chennai is Asia's largest walk-through aquarium, offering an extraordinary underwater experience. Spread across five thematic zones – rainforest, gorge, mangrove, coastal, and deep ocean – it houses a diverse range of marine and freshwater species, including sharks, stingrays, seahorses, and exotic tropical fishes. The highlight is its 70-meter underwater tunnel, providing a 360-degree view of marine life in a simulated ocean environment. Designed to entertain and educate, the aquarium blends technology with conservation awareness, making it an ideal destination for families, students, and marine enthusiasts. It's a fascinating journey into the depths of the ocean, right in the heart of Chennai.

Option 3 VISIT TO UNESCO HERITAGE SITE - MAHABALIPURAM

Mahabalipuram, also known as Mamallapuram, is a coastal heritage town in Tamil Nadu, famous for its stunning rock-cut temples and ancient Pallava architecture. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it showcases masterpieces like the Shore Temple, Arjuna's Penance, and the Five Rathas. These monuments, carved from granite in the 7th and 8th centuries, reflect the artistic and engineering brilliance of the Pallava dynasty. With its rich cultural legacy, captivating sculptures, and picturesque seafront location, Mahabalipuram offers a profound glimpse into South India's historic and spiritual past, making it a must-visit destination for history and art lovers.



Option 4 VISIT TO ICAR-CIBA, MUTTUKADU

The ICAR-CIBA hatchery at Muttukadu is India's first multi-species marine finfish hatchery with advanced Recirculating Aquaculture System (RAS) facilities. Since its establishment in 1995-96, the hatchery has achieved significant milestones, including the first successful captive breeding of Asian seabass and milkfish. It also produces seeds of grey mullet, mangrove red snapper, pearl spot, and ornamental fish. The facility supports sustainable aquaculture through seed distribution and farmer training. Additionally, it houses experimental hatcheries for shrimp and mud crab, focusing on breeding technologies and species diversification. This unique centre serves as a national resource for research, training, and innovation in brackishwater aquaculture.



Option 5

VISIT TO MUTTUKADU BOATHOUSE

Muttukadu Boat House, located on the East Coast Road in Kanchipuram district near Chennai, is a popular water sports and recreation hub operated by the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC). Nestled amidst shimmering backwaters, it offers a refreshing escape from the city with activities like rowing, windsurfing, water skiing, and speedboat rides. The boat house is perfect for both thrill-seekers and those seeking tranquil moments on the water. With its scenic coastal charm and a wide range of aquatic adventures, Muttukadu is an idyllic destination for families, tourists, and nature lovers alike.



Special Event

15 May 2025 | 0930-1730 hrs

COASTAL & MARINE LIFE

Live Painting Event



WAVES
of Art...

This event will provide a platform for art enthusiasts and Workshop participants to engage in sketching focussed on the theme of 'Coastal and Marine Life'. Watch talented artists as they work their magic on Paper/Canvas and T-shirts, turning simple fabric and paper into intricate works of art, each with their distinct style and creativeness.



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