

Thailand accedes to the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures

On 10 May 2016, H.E. Mr. Tana Weskosith, the Thai Ambassador to Italy, and Mr. Sompong Nimchuar, Minister (Agricultural Affairs) / Permanent Representative to FAO, met with H.E. Mr. José Graziano da Silva, the Director-General of the FAO, to present the Instrument of Accession of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing (PSMA). The PSMA is a key international agreement aimed at combating illegal fishing.

“Thailand’s accession to the PSMA will enhance the control over foreign-flagged fishing vessels and prevent the importation of IUU fish. It will also lead to broader and more effective cooperation between Thailand and other state Parties to the Agreement on information sharing to combat IUU fishing,” said the Thai Ambassador.

The accession to the PSMA underlies the commitment of the Royal Thai Government to comply with the international legal standard on combating IUU fishing and to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources. The accession is another milestone for Thailand as the Government continues to advance a comprehensive fisheries reform. It will also provide a critical momentum for the PSMA to enter into force, marking a major step in the international community’s joint effort to combat IUU fishing.

What are port state measures?

The Thai Government has started implementing port state measures since the Royal Ordinance on Fisheries 2015 entered into force in November 2015, before the country’s accession to the PSMA. This new fisheries law introduces strict inspection measures designed to prevent the entry of foreign-flagged vessels that engage in illegal fishing into Thailand.

Foreign-flagged vessels may request permission to berth and land their fish at one of the 27 designated ports. Among these ports, 15 are for foreign commercial vessels while 12 are for small vessels from neighboring countries, namely Malaysia, Myanmar and Cambodia.

A vessel that wishes to port in must submit the request to the Thai authorities at least 48 hours in advance. If the competent officer finds evidence that suggests the vessel has been involved in illegal fishing, then the vessel will be denied entry to port. Moreover, the Director-General of the Department of Fisheries may order the vessel to leave Thailand and may inform other relevant flat and costal states and international organizations about the vessel. Any vessel that is allowed to enter a Thai port must also request for permission to land the catch at port, upon which the competent officers will inspect the catch to ensure that it is not a product of illegal fishing.

To strengthen the implementation of port state measures, the Thai agencies are expeditiously developing electronic traceability system for aquatic animals and seafood products, and port state measures monitoring system. The systems will integrate the collection and cross-checking of traceability data and documents. When the development of the system has been completed, no illegal catch will enter the seafood supply chain.