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Editorial

It is widely recognized by the Southeast Asian countries that the wealth of the region's aquatic resources which was once assumed as infinite, needs to be properly managed to ensure their sustainable contribution to food security of the region's growing population. Earlier, the introduction of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the 70s and the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in early 1980s, allowing coastal States to manage and use the resources within their EEZs that extends 200 nautical miles (370 km) from their respective coasts, had been considered significant steps towards marine resources management. Such extended national jurisdiction was a welcome approach at the beginning, but later many coastal States began to experience the consequences of over-exploitation of the resources to obtain maximum benefits from fisheries in their EEZs. By early 1990s when it has become clearer that the fishery resources could no longer sustain the rapid and uncontrolled exploitation and development of fisheries, the earlier approach had been re-structured towards fisheries management that embraces conservation as well as environmental and social considerations. This led to the development and subsequent adoption of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) in 1995.

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In order to facilitate the implementation of the CCRF in Southeast Asia, SEAFDEC regionalized the CCRF starting in 1998, to take into consideration the specificities of the region's fisheries. With the cooperation and support from the SEAFDEC Member Countries, a series of Regional Guidelines were published by SEAFDEC including the Regional Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries in Southeast Asia: Responsible Fisheries Management which was printed in 2003. This Regional Guidelines was based on Article 7 of the CCRF but with additional provisions that took into consideration the 2001 Resolution and Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region which were adopted during the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Conference on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security in the New Millennium: "Fish for the People" in November 2001.