



The Establishment of the Seaweed Technical Working Group (S-TWG)
25-26 November 2025
WP01

Terms of Reference

I. Background

The Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) is an autonomous inter-governmental body established in 1967. SEAFDEC comprises 11 Member Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The mission of SEAFDEC is “*To promote and facilitate concerted actions among the Member Countries to ensure the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture in Southeast Asia.*”

SEAFDEC is implementing the Project “**Blue Horizon: Ocean Relief through Seaweed Aquaculture,**” which is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the WWF-US GEF Agency from May 2024 to December 2028. The Project is managed by the Project Management Unit (PMU) under the supervision of the SEAFDEC Secretary-General, with the PMU Office located at the SEAFDEC Secretariat, Bangkok, Thailand. The overarching goal of the project is to develop sustainable seaweed value chains that deliver ecosystem services and socioeconomic benefits. The project comprises four components: 1) Regional approach and capacity for seaweed value chains in Southeast Asia; 2) Enabling Environment for Seaweed Aquaculture in the Philippines and Viet Nam; 3) Seaweed Value Chains (production, processing, and marketing); and 4) Knowledge Management, M&E, and IW Learn (regional).

Under **Component 1**, SEAFDEC will support the development of regional plans and principles of responsible aquaculture, including a toolkit to guide the application of the principles in developing standards of product, environmental protection, and operational safety. These outputs are expected to foster a harmonized approach across the region. Training activities will enhance the capacity of Member Countries in applying these plans and standards.

To support these efforts, the project will establish a **Seaweed Technical Working Group (S-TWG)** as a platform for technical collaboration, policy alignment, and capacity building. The project’s Gender Action Plan (GAP) will be integrated across the entire project cycle to ensure inclusive participation, decision-making, and impact. SEAFDEC will promote gender-balanced representation within the S-TWG, supporting women’s engagement in leadership roles, and ensure that gender perspectives are incorporated into project planning, implementation, and evaluation.

II. Objectives

The main objective is to foster a supportive regional enabling environment for seaweed aquaculture through a coordinated regional approach. This will strengthen Southeast Asia’s capacity to expand and modernize its seaweed industry and increase its contribution to global

seaweed value chains. In particular, the S-TWG will guide the development of a Guide to Promoting a Sustainable Seaweed Industry in the Southeast Asia; the Principles of Responsible and Safe Seaweed Aquaculture; and a complementary Toolkit to support the application of these principles in developing standards of product quality, environmental management, and operational safety aligned with the Global Seaweed Coalition.

III. Expected Outcomes of S-TWG

1. Completion and regional endorsement of the Guide, Principles, and Toolkit
2. Enhanced regional collaboration and knowledge-sharing
3. Positive stakeholder feedback on the relevance and usability of the outputs
4. Mainstreaming of gender equality strategies into the seaweed industry, including actionable policy and practice recommendations.

IV. Scope of Work

The Seaweed Technical Working Group (S-TWG) will be composed of nominated experts from SEAFDEC Member Countries, a representative from the SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department (AQD) in the Philippines, and technical experts from relevant regional and international organizations, such as the Global Seaweed Coalition. The PMU SEAFDEC will lead the coordination process for the formal establishment of the S-TWG. This includes reaching out to Member Countries to request official nominations, identifying and engaging relevant institutions and experts, and facilitating their participation in technical forums. The PMU will also organize and convene the inaugural S-TWG meeting to review and endorse the Terms of Reference, develop a detailed work program for drafting the Regional Guide and Principles for Seaweed Aquaculture, and define strategies for scaling and sustaining project outcomes across Southeast Asia.

To promote gender equality and meaningful participation of women in the S-TWG, the project will adopt a gender-responsive approach from the start. SEAFDEC will encourage Member Countries to nominate qualified women and prioritize gender balance across sectors. The PMU SEAFDEC will embed gender considerations into the S-TWG's Terms of Reference, invitations, and work program to ensure inclusive participation and diverse perspectives in decision-making. Capacity-building will incorporate gender-sensitive content, and progress will be monitored through the Gender Action Plan to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

V. Terms of References of the S-TWG

1. Provide technical advice and recommendations on seaweed aquaculture development, including sustainable farming practices, value chain improvement, and ecosystem service integration.
2. Facilitate knowledge exchange, including technologies and best practices, to improve productivity and sustainability of seaweed products.
3. Provide technical expertise, leadership, and inputs for the consultant to develop, validate, review, and support adoption of the regional Guide (output 1.1.2) and Principles (output 1.1.3), and relevant guidelines/toolkits and standards to ensure the quality and safety of seaweed products.
4. Assist the consultant to connect with Member Countries in assessing seaweed regional and national regulatory, technical, and logistical challenges for market access.

5. Coordinate with regional and global initiatives to ensure strategic alignment and maximize synergies in sustainable seaweed production and development.
6. Represent a platform for awareness, networking, coordination, knowledge exchange among key authorities and organizations focused on seaweed development
7. Facilitate regional technical cooperation to address specific and shared concerns.

VI. Composition and Membership of S-TWG

1. **Members:** one expert from each ASEAN Member States with expertise in seaweed aquaculture and value chains, and an expert from SEAFDEC/AQD.
2. **Chairperson:** Elected at the start of each meeting, from among members. The Chairperson will report the S-TWG progress to the Project Steering Committee (PSC).
3. **Other resource persons/experts:** Additional experts from ASEAN Member States or international/regional organizations may be invited on an ad-hoc basis as needed.
4. **Gender Expert:** SEAFDEC's Gender Focal Point will guide the integration of gender perspectives in all outputs.
5. **Secretariat:** PMU SEAFDEC, led by the Project Manager/Technical Advisor in collaboration with the SEAFDEC Secretariat and SEAFDEC/AQD, shall serve as the secretariat of the S-TWG meetings, will coordinate meeting logistics, prepare agendas, and manage documentation.
6. **Rapporteur:** The Secretariat of S-TWG will act as rapporteur and circulate meeting reports to all members.

VII. Nature of S-TWG Activities and Financial Arrangements

1. S-TWG meetings will be convened throughout the project period, coordinated by PMU SEAFDEC with input from members and under the guidance of the SEAFDEC Secretariat.
2. Inter-sessional activities may be conducted as necessary, subject to funding availability.
3. Meetings and workshops will be funded by the Blue Horizon Seaweed Project, including cost for member participation. These may be conducted in-person, online, or hybrid formats.
4. Costs for attendance of consultants and resource persons during meetings or inter-sessional activities will be covered by the PMU SEAFDEC.
5. Based on S-TWG's advice, the SEAFDEC Council will determine appropriate follow-up actions, including referral the ASEAN mechanism.

VIII. Meeting Schedule of Seaweed Technical Working Group (S-TWG)

Meeting #	Purpose	Year
1	Develop the S-TWG work program, agree on meeting schedule and expected outputs, and endorse the ToR	2025
2	Define the scope and outline of the Guide , define tasks and responsibilities and timeline, review ToR for a consultant to assist in	2026

	drafting the Guide	
3	Initiate work on the Principles of Responsible and Safe Seaweed Aquaculture with experts and resource persons	2026
4	Review the draft Guide	2026
5	Validate the draft Guide	2027
6	Review the Principles and Toolkit and begin finalization of the drafts	2027
7	Validate the Principles and Toolkit	2028
8	Finalize the Guide , Principles and Toolkits; submit recommendations to SEAFDEC Council for endorsement	2028
9	Organize an online regional workshop to launch the Guide and Principles	2028