

Rethinking the Future of Thai Fisheries: COVID-19 and Vulnerable Groups in Thai Fisheries Sector

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Abstract

Fish and fish products are one of the most traded food products in the world, with 38 percent of fish and fish products in global trade. Therefore, fisheries are important to the livelihoods of many fishery dependent communities. In the face of the crisis, fisheries sector has been impacted quite early during the spreading of COVID-19 pandemic from the restrictions and closures of seafood supply chains in both global and domestic markets.

Thailand has been one of the top seafood exporters for over decades, which its sector has heavily relied on migrant labours from neighboring countries. Throughout 2010s, Thailand had been watched on situations of labour exploitations in seafood industries. Although the situations have been improved, however, it was stated in 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report that migrants working in fisheries are still in vulnerable situations. Moreover, since 1960, the Thai government has emphasized on supporting commercial fisheries. Thus, makes small-scale fishers have lacked of sufficient support.

Since the crisis has highlighted vulnerabilities, this presentation attempts to (1) examine impacts of COVID-19 pandemic to migrant labours in Thai fisheries and small-scale Thai fishers, who are vulnerable groups in the sector, as well as (2) to discuss the Thai fisheries prospects.