



Ambasciata d'Italia
Jakarta



AGENZIA ITALIANA
PER LA COOPERAZIONE
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CIHEAM
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Joint Press Release

COOPMEC: Italy and ASEAN strengthen Cooperation on Fisheries and Aquaculture

Hanoi, Jakarta – On 28 September 2026, the Steering Committee of “COOPMEC – Cooperation Mechanism for the Competitive Development of Aquaculture and Small-Scale Fisheries in ASEAN” met for the second time in a hybrid format at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. COOPMEC is an Italian Cooperation project implemented under the Italy–ASEAN Development Partnership.

The meeting approved the technical and financial report for the first year of activities and defined the operational work plan for the second year, further strengthening cooperation between Italy and ASEAN in the fields of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

The meeting was attended by delegates from ASEAN Member States, the Ambassador of Italy to Jakarta, Roberto Colaminé, the Italy-ASEAN Coordinator at AICS Hanoi, Gianpaolo Gullotta, the Director of the ASEAN Sectoral Development Directorate, Kanchana Wanichkorn, and the CIHEAM Bari Project Team, comprising Roberto Ugolini and Andrea D’Ambruoso.

COOPMEC is funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), with a budget of approximately €3 million, and is implemented by CIHEAM Bari.

“The first year of implementation of the COOPMEC initiative has proved its ability to translate some of its inspiring principles into action: sustainability, responsibility, and inclusivity. Through the interaction among all partners, a shared awareness has emerged that the economic sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture also depends on procedures for the standardization and traceability of products. At the same time, responsibility for maintaining a healthy environment in production areas is now fully recognized not only as an environmental obligation, but also as a prerequisite for maintaining adequate production levels. Italy is pleased to provide its technical contribution in these areas to its ASEAN partners and is also fully aware of the value of their experience in tropical waters, with a view to the global growth of the sector” stated the Ambassador of Italy to Jakarta, Roberto Colaminé.

Launched in 2025, COOPMEC aims to make small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in ASEAN more competitive, sustainable and inclusive. These are strategic sectors for the region's economy, food security and the livelihoods of coastal communities.

“COOPMEC is establishing itself as a long-term platform between Italy and ASEAN to promote technology transfer, foster new partnerships between Italian companies and local producers, and make a tangible contribution to strengthening food security in the region,” said Margherita Lulli, Head of Development Cooperation at AICS Hanoi.

During its first year, the project established its governance structure and launched its main technical activities. These included the process of harmonizing ASEAN Good Aquaculture Practices and the development of a roadmap for a pilot project in Vietnam, focusing on tilapia. A regional strategic document was also developed on abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear, one of the major sources of marine litter and a significant cause of impacts on coastal ecosystems.

Training has also played a key role. This included an in-person training session held at CIHEAM Bari's hub in Tricase (Lecce) in April 2026, attended by 25 public officials working in fisheries policy from ASEAN Member States, as well as a series of thematic webinars focusing on aquaculture, small-scale fisheries and the role of women in the sector.

“With COOPMEC, we are building something that goes beyond individual activities: a working community between Italy and ASEAN, bringing together experts, institutions and local communities to share knowledge and common goals. CIHEAM Bari is making its expertise and established network available to ASEAN to support the sector's transition towards more sustainable, competitive and inclusive fisheries and aquaculture. The first-year results, from good practices to pilot initiatives and training, are the first steps in a process designed to deliver lasting benefits to local communities and strengthen ties between our two regions,” commented Biagio Di Terlizzi, Director of CIHEAM Bari.

In the second year, the project will launch the pilot initiative in Vietnam, while training and capacity-building activities will continue, further strengthening dialogue and technical cooperation between Italy and ASEAN.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

1. Roberto Ugolini, CIHEAM Bari, Kanchana Wanichkorn, Director of the ASEAN Sectoral Development Directorate, Roberto Colaminè, Ambassador of Italy in Jakarta, Gianpaolo Gullotta, Italy-ASEAN Coordinator, AICS Hanoi.
2. ASEAN COOPMEC Steering Committee Group Picture: ASEAN, CIHEAM Bari, Italian Embassy in Jakarta, AICS Hanoi.



Photo 1



Photo 2