

## MARINE RESOURCES

# New fishing law 'lacks public input'

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The amended law that regulates the fishing industry lacks input from the people it affects, a seminar heard.

Kangwan Chantrachot, a lecturer at Kasetsart University's Fisheries Faculty, made the comments at a seminar discussing the impact of the European Commission's "yellow card" imposed on Thailand for its failure to deal with Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

"The government should allow people, especially fishermen, to jointly manage the country's marine resources by participating in the law change process," Mr Kangwan said.

Authorities should work with representatives of fishing operators in setting new fishing laws and regulations because lawyers do not understand the nature of fisheries, he added.

"New laws must be open to all stakeholders to help the country come up with better solutions," he said.

The amended fishing law, which took effect earlier this year, tightened up regulations on fishing activities as part of efforts to tackle IUU fishing. It banned illegal fishing boats and fishing gear, and required formal registration of all active fishing boats.

Thailand was hit with a European Union

yellow card on April 21 and given six months to improve the situation or face a red card which could hit Thai seafood exports to the EU. The deadline is next month.

Mr Kangwan said the Commahd Centre for Combating Illegal Fishing (CCCIF), which was set up in May, was not enough to address the IUU problems. "The CCCIF staff lack knowledge and understanding about fisheries."

Wicharn Sirichai-Ekawat, honorary adviser to the National Fisheries Association of Thailand, said invoking Section 44 under the interim charter to tackle illegal fishing was fine as long as the new measures were based on correct information. He agreed with Mr Kangwan the amended law lacked input from the public and could worsen the situation.

"The government blocked us [fishing operators] from the drafting process. The information we should know is kept confidential. Does it need to be confidential? This does not make any sense," he said.

More than 3,000 trawlers have remained docked to avoid legal penalties from the new regulations over the last three months, causing an economic loss to the country of 24.3 billion baht, Mr Wicharn claimed. The trade value of seafood products between Thailand and EU is about 1.7 billion baht annually, he added.