

10. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Table 1.4.10.1 below summarises the research foci and interests of regional intergovernmental bodies with respect to pollution from marine plastics. The AIS Forum is not included due to its early stage of development which renders premature an assessment of its approach.

While none of the bodies cover all 16 research topics we have investigated, some cover more topics. It is important to note that of the seven regional bodies considered, four have a general mandate that covers all aspects of the protection of the marine environment: ASEAN, COBSEA, PEMSEA and APEC. The other three are specialised in biodiversity and fisheries, fisheries and marine science research, respectively. Not all of them have a policy mandate, although they may draft guidelines or standards that may be later embraced by policy bodies.

This comparison also highlights that COBSEA stands out as the regional body with the most developed action plans and documents with respect to marine plastics, which can be explained by an earlier start on this topic through its focus driven by UNEP on marine debris. ASEAN follow closely. Another clear feature of this comparison is the regional focus on waste management, a key focus of all regional bodies with a general mandate with respect to the protection of the marine environment.

Table 1.4.10.1. Research focus of non-ASEAN regional intergovernmental bodies with respect to marine plastics.
 Legend: Red = no research or interest expressed; Light-green = expressed or inferred interest; Dark-green = active or proposed research.

Research Focus	ASEAN	COBSEA	PEMSEA	APEC	CTI-CFF	SEAFDEC	IOC-WESTPAC
Policy, laws, administrative measures, action plans, guidelines	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Light-green	Light-green	Dark-green
Upstream research/circular economy, waste management	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Dark-green	Red	Red	N.A.
Methodology for monitoring of marine plastic litter, surveys and monitoring, pollution status	Dark-green	Dark-green	Light-green	Red	Red	Dark-green	Red
Accumulation zones & Hotspots	Light-green	Light-green	Red	Red	Light-green	Red	Red
Contribution from rivers	Light-green	Red	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Source differentiation	Dark-green	Light-green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Discharge from offshore infrastructures (incl. aquaculture)	Light-green	Light-green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Contribution of fisheries/Lost and abandoned fishing gear	Dark-green	Light-green	Red	Red	Light-green	Dark-green	Red
Fragmentation and degradation	Light-green	Light-green	Red	Red	Light-green	Red	Red
Ecological and environmental impact	Dark-green	Light-green	Red	Red	Light-green	Red	Red
Socio-economic impact	Dark-green	Light-green	Red	Dark-green	Red	Red	N.A.
Public outreach/beach clean-up, social perspective	Dark-green	Red	Red	Red	Dark-green	Red	N.A.
Organic/inorganic contaminants associated with marine plastics	Light-green	Light-green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Port reception facilities	Light-green	Light-green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Fibreglass-reinforced plastic vessels	Red	Light-green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red