

Workshops on Managing Aquatic Genetic Resources in Fisheries and Aquaculture

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Two workshops on managing aquatic genetic resources in fisheries and aquaculture were recently convened by FIRI and key partners working on responsible fisheries.

Regional Workshop on Genetic Resource Management in Sub-Saharan Africa, 27 February to 3 March 2006, Accra, Ghana

FIRI, through the Fisheries Department Group of the FAO Regional Office for Africa (FAO RAF) received financial support from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and a private consulting company, Technoserve, to arrange a regional workshop on *Genetic Resource Management in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 27 February – 3 March, 2006. The workshop was organised to provide a forum for producers, fish geneticists, environmental regulators and other stakeholders to discuss issues surrounding the setting up of programmes to develop local improved varieties and the importation of existing improved strains. Participants received an overview of the technical issues revolving around genetic improvement. Industry representatives drafted a Producers' Position Statement encapsulating their point of view on the political and technical aspects relating to the culture of improved strains. This technical background also served as the foundation for elaborating three technical briefs on central genetics-related subjects. These briefs present the topics in succinct non-technical language for use by farm or hatchery managers as well as to inform technocrats and decision-makers. Participants made the following conclusions:

- ❑ Aquaculture has a significant potential to contribute to poverty alleviation, food security and economic growth.
- ❑ Based on the best available technical information and the legitimate needs for improved food security and economic growth, African fish producers are in general agreement that the rules and

regulations governing access to, and use of improved aquaculture stocks are in need of revision.

- ❑ The illegal importation of alien species and strains is increasing, posing threats to both the indigenous fauna and the aquaculture industry.
- ❑ There are strong commonalities among fish farmers in the region in terms of constraints to growth; however, critical mass (e.g., functional producers' organisations), which could support the development of hatchery and other key elements in the production chain (e.g., feeds) is lacking in most countries and some type of regional structure that could channel support services is clearly needed.
- ❑ Implementation of this process should be based firmly on a public-private partnership built on trust and the appreciation of the potential mutual benefits for farms and the broader society of a prosperous and responsible aquaculture sector.
- ❑ Fish producers will have to fully cooperate with research and regulatory bodies to ensure that best management practices are being adhered to and that changes in biodiversity in areas affected by aquaculture are closely monitored and that any problems arising are rapidly and effectively addressed.
- ❑ The meeting acknowledges the commitment of the farmers and the obligations they have accepted in return for a revision of the policy surrounding the important and use of genetically improved stocks (e.g., GIFT). It will be essential for international, national and regional agencies and natural resource managers to work closely with the fish farming industry.



Top Photo: Genetically improved Nile tilapia such as this are highly desired by fish farmers in Africa

Bottom Photo: Eddie Abban giving lecture on genetic resource management in aquaculture

The report of the workshop will be published as a CIFA occasional paper. For further details, please contact John Moehl of FAO RAF at e-mail: John.Moehl@fao.org.

Expert Workshop on Status and Trends in Aquatic Genetic Resources: a Basis for International Policy, 8-10 May 2006, Victoria, British Columbia

A second workshop, *Status and Trends in Aquatic Genetic Resources: a Basis for International Policy*, was convened in Victoria, British Columbia on 8-10 May, 2006. In 1995, the FAO Conference decided to broaden the mandate of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources to cover all components of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture and thus created the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA). At its Tenth Session, the CGRFA agreed that its Secretariat, in cooperation with the FAO's relevant services and inter-departmental working groups, should submit a Multi-Year Programme of Work to its Eleventh Session. In the medium and longer

term, the Commission would implement its full mandate, which would include work related to Fisheries. The Secretariat was requested to prepare a document on the status of the resources and needs of the various sectors, including fisheries. In response to the above request, the Fishery Resources Division of FAO (FIR) and the CGRFA, in collaboration with the World Fisheries Trust (Canada), brought together a small group of internationally recognized experts in the fields of aquaculture, capture fisheries, molecular genetics and genomics, the deep sea, international development, and aquatic conservation to:

- ❑ review the status of trends of aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity in key areas within fisheries and aquaculture that include aquaculture, capture fisheries (inland and marine), the deep sea, and modern genomics and biotechnology; and
- ❑ identify key policy issues, priorities and implications for the international development community, and specifically for FAO and the CGRFA, in regards to aquatic genetic resources and biodiversity.

The workshop identified areas of work that FAO could pursue to address improving information on status of aquatic genetic resources, capacity building, creating policy instruments, raising awareness and education. Creation of Technical Guidelines on Genetic Resources in Fisheries and Aquaculture was a specific recommendation from the workshop. Mr Brian Harvey (Canada) further offered support for a workshop on how to reach target audiences, i.e., stakeholders, in order to raise the profile of genetic resources for fisheries and aquaculture.

The report of the workshop including the reviews of status and trends in aquatic genetic resources will be published by FAO. Further details are available from Devin M. Bartley (Devin.Bartley@fao.org).

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