



# CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES

Aquaculture, the world's fastest growing food production sector, provides affordable nutritious food fish to poor and vulnerable communities in the developing world, and also contributes to foreign earnings of many countries through high value, export-oriented production. The sector, which is dominated by small-scale farmers, employs about 23 million people worldwide.

Since the launch of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in 1995, FAO has developed an array of technical guidelines to provide advice and guidance for sustainable development of aquaculture. Countries have found these guidelines effective and useful, and many have incorporated them into national legal frameworks. Sustainable development of the sector is evident from the fact that the contribution of aquaculture to global food fish consumption has risen from 20 percent in 1995 to nearly 50 percent today.

## **Aquaculture sector fights fish diseases**

As with any food production sector, intensification and diversification of aquaculture practices have led to expanded movement of goods and services. At the same time, pathogens also are continuously moved from place to place through uncontrolled movement of live aquatics and aquatic products, leading to the emergence of diseases, causing severe mortality and significant economic losses – major constraints to sector development.

FAO has initiated activities aimed at better biosecurity governance, responsible movement of live aquatics and aquatic products, enhanced compliance with regional and international treaties which govern biosecurity, risk-based approaches to introductions and movements of live aquatics, science-based surveillance programmes, accurate and rapid diagnostic services, and robust emergency preparedness and response programmes – all of which are cornerstones needed to reduce the risks of diseases.

## **AQUACULTURE NETWORKS CONTRIBUTE TO DISEASE CONTROL**

Because of the transboundary nature of fish diseases and in some cases the difficulty of implementing control measures, especially in natural waters, FAO leads efforts to build partnerships and enhance regional and international cooperation to minimize risks of disease introduction and spread. FAO has supported the establishment of five regional aquaculture networks, dating back to the establishment of the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia and the Pacific (NACA) in the 1980s. An inter-governmental organization with 17 Member Countries, NACA shares resources and responsibilities for identifying and solving problems as the sector seeks to modernize and expand. Other FAO-supported regional aquaculture networks are in Africa, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe and a pipeline network in the Pacific region. These aquaculture networks provide a regional and international platform for global action on fish disease issues affecting sustainable aquaculture.

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# EXAMPLES OF IMPACT

## EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO COMBAT EUS IN CHOBE- ZAMBEZI RIVER

In 2006, epizootic ulcerative syndrome (EUS), a fish fungal disease previously known only in Asia and North America, was introduced into the waterways of southern Africa, particularly the Chobe-Zambezi River basin. An FAO task force, working with partners such as the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and NACA, responded immediately.

**PROCESS:** FAO subsequently trained fisheries officials of the seven countries bordering the Zambezi basin on EUS identification, field sampling, basic aquatic animal health management and risk analysis,



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implemented a targeted surveillance for EUS, and helped build the capacity of a reference laboratory in the region. Working with governments, at least 20 African species susceptible to EUS were identified.

**IMPACT:** The countries now have a system for collecting field samples which can be sent to a regional reference laboratory, established to assist in EUS diagnosis. Awareness on biosecurity risks has been raised at all levels including fishers, fishfarmers and policy-makers.

## STRENGTHENING AQUACULTURE HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina was known for its long history of aquaculture but its infrastructure was destroyed along with most of the agricultural sector in the 1992–1995 war in the region. When reconstruction began after the war, and the country did not even have a department of agriculture, the first thing it built was a State Veterinary Office (SVO).

**PROCESS:** In 2006, with the support of FAO, the country began a programme to strengthen its capacity in aquaculture health management, supporting sustainable and healthy aquaculture production for consumption and trade. At that time, aquaculture had the highest annual growth rate in the country's agriculture sector.



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**IMPACT:** Working with the state veterinarians, FAO helped bring the national aquaculture sector into compliance with international standards on aquatic animal health as well as other international trading requirements for fish and fishery products through design and implementation of surveillance system and enhancing institutional capacity of national authorities and the national fish health reference laboratory, and the human capacity of veterinary administrators and inspectors, and primary producers. Aquaculture production increased by 12 percent during the project and the country began exporting fish products to the EU. In addition, the SVO received FAO's 2010-2011 Edouard Saouma Award, given to an institution which has implemented an FAO project with particular efficiency.

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