



Mussel farming off the Island of Chiloé

Development of Bivalve Aquaculture in Latin America

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Aquaculture in Latin America and the Caribbean region has expanded steadily since the past two decades, particularly with regards to selected shrimp and finfish species. Molluscs, especially bivalves, are currently the third largest group of marine organisms in terms of aquaculture production. In 2005, according to FAO statistics, the region produced approximately 130 000 tonnes of molluscs. This production has doubled since the beginning of this last decade.

The interest in farming a variety of bivalve species of commercial importance is increasing among both small and large investors active in the sector. Indeed, bivalves feed at the top of the food chain and hence, are a relatively cheap source of animal protein compared to farmed fish and crustaceans. The increase demand for such products may certainly help the aquaculture sector in the region to expand further and provide employment opportunities and businesses.

In order to promote the expansion and sustainable development of bivalve aquaculture and management in the region, FAO recently organized a regional workshop on the “Status of bivalve aquaculture and management and its future prospective: factors affecting the sustainability of this industry in



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Latin America”. The workshop, held in Puerto Montt, Chile, from 20 to 24 August 2007, and organized in collaboration with the Universidad Austral de Chile, was aimed at discussing technical and socio-economic issues related to bivalve farming as well as to identify future research and policy needs to promote the development of this economic sector.

The workshop highlighted the main features of bivalve aquaculture in terms of its economic and social impacts, scientific and technological developments, and proposed strategies for seizing the opportunities to promote its development in the region by overcoming the threats that are currently affecting the industry.

The workshop report, now available, analyzes and presents the results of the meeting, including a series of actions (national and regional) which have been grouped as follows: (i) identification of priority areas, trading opportunities and constraints faced by the bivalve aquaculture and fisheries management sectors in Latin America; (ii) a priority list of the main research and development needs to support bivalve farming and management in the region and in the single countries; (iii) a priority list of the major governmental policies, science and industry actions needed to contribute to the certification of farmed products in terms of food security; and (iv) a priority list of social responsibilities and policies that will allow its sustainable development. The report also contains the papers presented at the meeting some of which describe the status of bivalve aquaculture development in the major producing countries in the region while others focus on the different technical aspects of this industry.