

# RECOFI-WGA Regional Technical Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health

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The Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) Regional Technical Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health, held in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 6 to 10 April 2008, was implemented by the RECOFI Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) in response to one of the recommendations of the fourth session of RECOFI (Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 7–9 May 2007) and technical meeting of the RECOFI Regional Aquaculture Information System (Kuwait City, Kuwait, 6–8 November 2007). Hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 19 delegates participated representing official participants and observers from five RECOFI member countries (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates) and representatives from FAO (Cairo, Jeddah and Rome).

The major activities undertaken during the workshop included: (1) a number of presentations<sup>1</sup> were delivered to set the scene for the regional strategy planning; (2) working group discussions tasked to examine the overall Aquatic Animal Health Programme component and essential elements that are covered, from both regional and national perspectives and from the overall goal and for each of the elements, to identify specific activities, timeframe, responsibility, indicators and potential problems; and finally approve the framework for the regional programme; (3) field trip to the National Prawn Company (NPC)<sup>2</sup> located at Al-Lith, south of Jeddah; and (4) a technical seminar<sup>3</sup>. As part of the programme planning

exercise, the working groups were guided to perform a simple SWOT (strengthens, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) exercise, in which they brainstormed on these various categories as they relate to the development and success of a regional programme for aquatic animal health.

The three main documentation outputs of the workshop were:

**FAO/Regional Commission for Fisheries.** 2008. Report of the Regional Technical Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health. Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 6–10 April 2008. *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report*. No. 876. Rome, FAO. 2008. 119p.

**Arthur, J.R., Reantaso, M.B. and Lovatelli, A.** 2008. RECOFI regional aquatic animal health capacity and performance survey: Summary of survey results and analysis. In FAO/Regional Commission for Fisheries. Report of the Regional Technical Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health. Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 6–10 April 2008. *FAO Fisheries and*

*Aquaculture Report*. No. 876. Rome, FAO. pp. 21–99

**RECOFI.** 2008. Proposal for a regional programme for improving aquatic animal health in RECOFI member countries. In FAO/Regional Commission for Fisheries. Report of the Regional Technical Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health. Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 6–10 April 2008. *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report*. No. 876. Rome, FAO. pp. 101–118.

The workshop report (FAO/RECOFI, 2008) highlighted the major achievements of the workshop which included the following:

- RECOFI member countries fully cooperated in the completion of the questionnaires which were presented and further discussed and finalized during the workshop and served as basis for the development of a regional programme.
- Proposal for a Regional Programme for Improving Aquatic Animal Health in RECOFI member countries – developed during the regional workshop based on the



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Participants attending the RECOFI-WGA aquatic animal health workshop

outcomes of the questionnaire survey and the working group discussion; outlines a long-term agreed-upon plan of activities to improve aquatic animal health capacity in the RECOFI member countries and identifies activities of regional interest and importance.

- Awareness and capacity building on aquatic animal health – a significant activity where workshop participants acquired knowledge on aquatic animal health concepts such as basic fish health management, development of aquatic animal health strategy, general principles of the risk analysis process and field experiences in dealing with important aquatic diseases such as Koi herpes virus and epizootic ulcerative syndrome.
- Interim activities identified with agency responsibilities prior to the next RECOFI session scheduled for May 2009.

The survey and performance report (Arthur, Reantaso and Lovatelli, 2008) outlines the processes undertaken in the development of the survey questionnaires, its objectives, its implementation and the outcomes and analysis of the survey returns. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information on national capacity and the agencies mandated to implement aquatic animal health programmes for the eight RECOFI member countries (Bahrain, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). The survey also collected relevant information essential to support the development of the aquaculture sector through healthy aquatic production and seeks opinions on the components and activities that might be included in a regional aquatic animal health programme. The results of this survey will help guide regional and national strategic planning for improving aquatic animal health and assuring adequate and rational support services to achieve sustainable aquaculture development. The survey questionnaire contained 18 sections pertaining to: (1) international trade in live aquatic animals and national border controls; (2) control of domestic movement of live aquatic animals and other domestic activities that may spread pathogens; (3) policy and planning; (4) legislation; (5) disease surveillance/monitoring; (6) disease diagnostics; (7) emergency preparedness and contingency planning; (8) extension services; (9) compliance/enforcement; (10) research; (11) training; (12) expertise; (13) infrastructure; (14) linkages and cooperation; (15) funding support; (16) current challenges; (17) constraints; and (18) additional information.

The proposal for a regional programme for improving aquatic animal health in RECOFI member countries (RECOFI, 2008) outlines a long-term, agreed-upon plan of activities to improve aquatic animal health capacity in the RECOFI member countries. The Programme identifies the activities of regional interest and importance that can be addressed jointly by RECOFI members and the national aquatic animal health activities that must be accomplished by individual RECOFI countries in order to accomplish the Regional Programme itself. The finalized Regional Programme will be submitted to the RECOFI Commission for endorsement and possible funding support. It may also be used to approach international organizations such as the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and other regional and bilateral mechanisms, as well as the RECOFI governments for possible funding and/or organizational support. The Regional Programme includes a Vision and set of Guiding Principles for aquatic animal health in the RECOFI region and consists of five Programme Components, within which are 18 Programme Elements containing a total of 44 Programme Activities. The five Programme Components address the broad themes of: Governance, Disease diagnostics, Aquatic biosecurity, Access to information, and Regional cooperation and networking. Throughout the various components of the Regional Programme, where appropriate, emphasis will be placed on developing capacity to deal with health problems

in key species that are widely cultured in the RECOFI region. These include: marine finfishes (e.g. seabreams, groupers, snappers); penaeid shrimp; and freshwater finfish (e.g. tilapia, common carp). The Regional Programme recognized the importance of human capacity building, and this is addressed primarily in the form of training programmes and workshops for the various areas of aquatic animal health. Development of research capacity is also highly important; however, this generally involves post-graduate training and thus is to be addressed by the national governments.



*IQF shrimp produced by the National Prawn Company (NPC)*

<sup>1</sup>Included presentations on (a) Harmonization of international and regional planning and policy for aquatic animal health – experiences from Asia and elsewhere; (b) RECOFI regional aquatic animal health capacity and performance survey – survey results and analysis; (c) Regional strategy for improving aquatic animal health capacity in RECOFI member countries; and (d) Outline of possible contents of a regional strategy.

<sup>2</sup>The NPC is one of the world's largest fully integrated desert coastal shrimp (*Penaeus indicus*) farm, resulting from research and development initiated in late 1990s.

<sup>3</sup>Included presentations on (1) Health management in aquaculture; (2) Lessons learned in managing Koi herpes virus outbreak in Indonesia and epizootic ulcerative syndrome in southern Africa; (3) Role of risk analysis in aquatic animal health planning and management; and (4) Some practical experience in risk analysis for aquatic animals.