

Welcome address by the Director-General of FAO

Special Event: *The Role of Aquaculture in Sustainable Development*

19 November 2007

Excellencies,
Distinguished Ministers and Heads of Delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to FAO Headquarters for this Special Event on the Role of Aquaculture in Sustainable Development.

We are particularly honoured by the presence of Her Excellency Helga Pedersen, Minister for Fisheries and Coastal Affairs of Norway, and His Excellency Amin Ahmed Mohamed Othman Abbaza, Minister for Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt, who have kindly agreed to co-chair this event.

The presence of so many decision-makers today is evidence of a desire to achieve our agreed and shared objective of bolstering the role of aquaculture, not only in fighting hunger and poverty, but also in contributing to the economic and social development of member countries.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the beginning of this year, FAO has had a Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. This change under the process of FAO reform reflects the growing economic importance of aquaculture and its contribution to the fight against hunger and poverty.

This special event allows us to take stock of the world aquaculture situation, to determine trends and to define priorities and guidelines for future actions.

There are encouraging elements. Decision-makers at the highest level have the political will to include aquaculture in their programmes of action and to implement policies for the sustainable development of the sector.

Aquaculture continues to expand more rapidly than other sectors producing food of animal origin. World aquaculture has grown by an average annual rate of 8.8 percent since 1970, compared to only 1.2 percent for capture fisheries and 2.8 percent for land-based animal production. Aquaculture production amounted to 48 million tonnes in 2005 and is expected to rise to 85 million tonnes by 2030.

There are however major constraints and real threats to the development of aquaculture.

These include the depletion of land and water resources, particularly fresh water for aquaculture farms, the limited availability and the cost of feed, the difficult access to investment capital (especially in developing countries), the high cost of energy which could be further compounded by rising oil prices, and the problems that small producers have in being competitive because of tariff barriers and technical obstacles to trade. In addition, climate change could impact negatively on ecosystems and their resources.

A rapid development of aquaculture therefore requires better planning and better management of the sector in order to mitigate the adverse consequences on the environment.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we enter the third millennium, we need to develop aquaculture to offset the downturn in fish landings from capture fisheries. Aquaculture has clear potential for economic and social development in many countries.

I should like to seize this opportunity to reiterate the importance of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries that was drawn up by FAO. Application of the principles and guidelines of this Code should help define policies and adopt measures, at regional, subregional, national and local level, that are geared towards the sustainable development of

fisheries and aquaculture, while at the same time adhering to the specific characteristics of individual countries.

I have every confidence that your work today will give added impetus to the actions that have already been undertaken in this field.

His Excellency Mahinda Rajapakse, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was to participate in the introduction of this special event. He has unfortunately been held back in his country, which we sincerely regret. He did however agree to send us a video message, for which I thank him. I propose that we now listen to his message.

Thank you.