

## ASSESSING MARKETS AND MARKET CONDITIONS FOR AQUATIC PRODUCTS IN ASIA

"Aquamarkets 2003: Accessing markets and fulfilling market requirements of aquatic products, seminar, consultation and exhibition", was held in Manila, the Philippines from 2-6 June 2003. It was co-organized by the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). FAO provided assistance to the organization and implementation of this important initiative.

Aquamarkets 2003 was organized following the recommendations made during the NACA/FAO Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium, held in Bangkok in February 2000, the Association of South East Asian Nations - South East Asian Fisheries Development Center (ASEAN-SEAFDEC) "Fish for the People" Conference in Bangkok in November 2001, the first meeting of FAO's Committee on Fisheries' (COFI) Subcommittee on Aquaculture, held in Beijing in April 2002, the ASEAN-European Union (EU) AquaChallenge Workshop, also held in Beijing in April 2002, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) survey on Asian and Pacific fishery implemented with INFOFISH.

The outputs expected from Aquamarkets 2003 were the following:

- Increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of participants, particularly farmers and potential exporters, on core issues and approaches to accessing and meeting requirements of markets for aquaculture products, as well as on the key stakeholders and players involved;
- Recommendations for action on accessing and meeting requirements of markets for aquaculture products; and
- A technical report on issues and approaches on accessing and meeting requirements of markets for aquaculture products in the Asia-Pacific Region.

### ATTENDANCE

In total, 156 sectoral stakeholders from Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam and the United States of America, and from regional and international organizations and institutions such as: ASEAN Fisheries Federation, INFOFISH, FAO, SEAFDEC, the Global Aquaculture Alliance/Aquaculture Certification Council (GAA/ACC), the World Fish Centre (ICLARM), International Marine Alliance and the Nature Conservancy (IMA/TNC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) attended the activity.

### ISSUES DISCUSSED

First, a two-day Seminar was held, which consisted of presentations and panel discussions on selected issue areas, including product standards, food safety and quality, certification, marketing efficiency, trade and marketing linkages with poverty, food security and environmental sustainability, international trade agreements and national import regulations, and tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade. This was followed by a two-day Regional Consultation, with special sessions on trade, marketing and poverty.

The Proceedings of the Seminar – Consultation on Accessing Markets and Fulfilling Market Requirements of Aquatic Products will be published shortly by NACA, however, most presentations and the draft proceedings can be found on the NACA website at the following address: <http://www.enaca.org/AquaMarkets/index.htm>.

### STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Strategies for action on accessing and meeting market requirements of aquatic products were discussed during a special session of the Seminar. Five broad categories of strategy were identified. These focused on:

- Strengthening regional capacities
  - to produce and deliver clean, safe and quality products, according to market requirements, as well as in line with environmental and other standards;
  - to transact with buyers and/or importing countries;
  - to negotiate or participate effectively in various fora, including Codex Alimentarius, the Subcommittee on Fish Trade of FAO's COFI, and the WTO, as well as bilaterally;
  - to influence trade policies through collective regional action.
- Improving domestic market systems (infrastructure, regulations).
- Augmenting access to information and technology.
- Increasing marketing cooperation among aquaculture producers, and
- Improving cooperation among regional governments (particularly to liberalize trade in aquaculture products).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants at the Aquamarkets 2003 consultation endorsed the recommendations on markets and trade and on food quality and safety contained in the Bangkok Declaration on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium.

Consultation participants made the following ten recommendations to further support the region in accessing markets and meeting market requirements for products from aquaculture:

- Encourage nations in the Asia-Pacific Region to improve national, regional and international cooperation in order to better share information on markets and trade in aquaculture products, and to ensure that relevant information on fisheries and aquaculture are provided to those engaged in trade negotiations.
- Improve information exchange and communication on marketing and trade in aquaculture products in the Asia-Pacific Region, such as through the development of a regional website, linked with national focal points for information exchange.
- Give special consideration to small holders and economically vulnerable people in the development of national and regional policies in the area of marketing and trade. Enhance understanding of relevant issues (such as the structure and conduct of the domestic market, marketing infrastructure and investment needs, and marketing

- finance) to inform policy making and support fair trade.
- Enhance cooperation between the private and public sectors on activities to improve access to markets and meeting market requirements.
- Encourage nations in the Asia-Pacific Region to develop a common stance on issues of interest to the aquaculture sector. In particular, efforts are required to harmonize standards and technical regulations, regionally as well as internationally.
- Encourage importing countries and regions, such as the European Community (EC), to harmonize the application of rules and standards and to make these transparent.
- Encourage common regional positions and understanding on issues of interest to the region, for example on Codex Alimentarius, the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE) standard setting, and other relevant work on international aquaculture standards.
- Examine the possibility of establishing a harmonized certification system for aquaculture products from the region.
- Organize further national and regional consultations to promote better national and regional cooperation and information sharing.
- Request regional and international organizations to provide support, technical assistance and capacity building to national and regional efforts with a view to implementing the above recommendations of the consultation, including capacity building on WTO agreements and negotiations issues.

## FOLLOW-UP

The participants agreed to develop follow-up projects and technical cooperation activities to translate into action the above recommendations made during this highly successful and appreciated event. Meanwhile, in an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Fisheries Working Group-sponsored workshop along the same lines recently held in Lima, Peru, the workshop participants recommended that APEC consider adopting the AquaMarkets 2003 Recommendations "in view of their relevance to the objectives of the workshop and APEC."

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