

Aquaculture – the only way to fill the coming "fish gap"

Outcomes of the High Level Special Event on Aquaculture

19 November 2007, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

On 19 November 2007, top fisheries ministers of Algeria, Angola, Bahamas, Bahrain, Chad, Ecuador, Eritrea, Faroe Islands, Ghana, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Indonesia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda and other high level delegates from many other countries, debated on the future of fish farming during the High Level Special Event on Aquaculture held at the FAO Headquarters in conjunction with the 34th Session of the FAO Conference (17-24 November 2007).



FAO Director-General, Jacques Diouf, delivered the opening statement where he expressed the importance of the aquaculture sector and future challenges in ensuring its sustainability. He informed the meeting that further development of the aquaculture sector should be a priority for the international development agenda. However, he cautioned that good policy decisions regarding the use of natural resources like water, land, seed and feed as well as sound environmental management will be necessary to sustain and enhance the further growth of the sector.



The Honorable President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr Mahinda Rajapaksa, in a video-taped message, underscored the important role that fish farming plays by supporting people's livelihoods in Asia and elsewhere. "For largely rural-based societies, aquaculture provides many opportunities for low income earners to diversify their livelihoods to obtain a larger income," he said. The Honorable President thanked FAO for bringing the subject of aquaculture to a high level of discussion and made several recommendations and remarks towards making aquaculture a high priority sector for global social and economic development within the mandate of FAO.



The Assistant Director-General, Ichiro Nomura, of the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, introduced the salient points of the conference working document

“The role of aquaculture in sustainable development”. The document highlighted that aquaculture helps reduce hunger and malnutrition by providing food rich in protein, fatty acids, vitamins and minerals and significantly improves food security by creating jobs and raising incomes. Twelve million people in Asia, for instance, are directly employed by the sector. The document also emphasized that while Africa is the only region where the per capita consumption of fish has dropped and whose share of the global aquaculture production is less than one percent, it has full resource potential for aquaculture growth and should be a “priority region” for support aimed at promoting aquaculture development.

The High Level Special Event, co-chaired by Ms Helga Pedersen, Minister of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs of Norway and Mr Amin Ahmed Mohamed Othman Abbaza, Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt, concluded that:

- Although negative environmental impacts of aquaculture have been significantly reduced through continued stakeholder participation, the importance of continued sustainable aquaculture production, with minimal negative social and environmental impact as imperative.
- Small-scale aquaculture farmers are facing difficulties in producing for export due to stringent trading requirements. Thus, empowering small-scale farmers to become competitive in global trade is therefore important and urgent, and, perhaps, is a significant corporate social responsibility.
- With the limited contribution of capture fisheries, the importance of aquaculture as a strong food producing sector is duly recognised. Better management of the sector is essential to ensure maximising its contribution to social wellbeing, national economies and international trade.
- Creating a sound enabling policy, regulatory, institutional, and economic environment, including strong private sector investments, to ensure sustainability is important and necessary.
- Government commitment to provide appropriate support to aquaculture growth is essential. Such commitment should be expressed in the form of clear articulation of policies, plans, regulatory frameworks and strategies, availability of adequate funding for their implementation, and incentives for investment.



- There is a clear need for a concerted effort towards promoting aquaculture development in Africa, as part of the overall regional development programme. FAO’s Special Programme for Aquaculture Development in Africa (SPADA [see pages 5-8]) was highlighted as a platform for collaboration.
- Institutional and regional cooperation are important for technology transfer, sharing experiences, improving production and dealing with trans-boundary issues.
- Research, training, capacity building and extension are key areas for sustainable development of aquaculture.
- The issue of climate change and its potential effects on aquaculture should be further studied and researched, in order to enable necessary adaptations based on gained knowledge.
- A strong call for increased allocation of resources in aquaculture was emphasized. Strengthened assistance to Members by FAO, as well as (an intensification of) its normative work was recognised as necessary in order to realize the full potential of aquaculture.

The main message of the event was that because traditional capture fisheries have reached their maximum production levels, ***fish farming represents the only way to fill the gap.*** But it will only do so if it is promoted and managed in a responsible manner.

The full documentation of the High Level Special Event can be found at the link below:

<http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/17000>