

Closing Remarks by Manuel Barange
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at
VIRTUAL DIALOGUES ON THE ROAD TO THE 34TH COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES
Innovative biosecurity approaches for a healthier aquaculture industry

Wednesday 15 July 2020, 16:00-17:30
Zoom Webinar

Dear Member Representatives, Expert Panelists, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of FAO, let me extend our most sincere appreciation to everyone, the guest speakers, expert panelists and all participants.

I am pleased with the very rich exchange of technical information and perspectives captured from the lens of industry, academia and governance authorities.

I would like to highlight some of the key messages from our expert panelists in addressing biosecurity and aquatic animal health management in aquaculture:

I'd like to begin with the first key message that **the use of infected broodstock perpetuates diseases in grow-out with economic and social impacts as consequences. Thus, the first step to control disease is the stocking of non-infected animals and this can be achieved through the use of SPF stocks.**

From the biggest aquaculture producing country, China, the important message in aquatic disease management is to **focus on prevention, supported with a comprehensive and systematic implementation of preventive measures and disease management and control systems.** Good national planning, continuous improvement and progressive implementation are critical to cope with aquaculture biosecurity and to maintain the country's aquaculture sustainability.

In the African region, approaches need to involve local communities, harnessing capacity and improving on available infrastructure, human, private and public sector resources and the need for robust capacity building including for producers/fishers, networking and research to enable all aspects of aquaculture health management to meet the required standards.

On antimicrobial resistance, **responsible antimicrobial use in aquaculture is important for fish welfare and can minimize development of AMR. There were two innovative approaches presented, i.e. vaccination and microbial management.**

Vaccines have proven to be one of the key measures in controlling infectious diseases and preventing disease outbreaks. **However, the use of vaccines seems to be limited in**

many segments of the aquaculture industry. Thus, there is a need for more investments to develop easy applicable, low cost vaccines to reduce the consumption of antibiotics and improve long-term disease control and sustainable production.

Disinfection to eradicate pathogens has the negative impact that it also kills good bacteria. The impact of these practices on both the environment/ecosystem and the farmed animals has been underestimated. **Better understanding of microbiomes and their functions will allow to develop better strategies to install microbial stability following disinfection protocols.** Good aquaculture practices need to be updated with better microbial management protocols to better prevent disease outbreaks and reduce the need for disease treatment and use of antibiotics.

Last but certainly not the least, FAO is clear: **Preventive biosecurity measures are less expensive than solution-based, reactionary responses to outbreaks** - biosecurity, therefore, should be in place alongside aquaculture development by all producing countries. This means an understanding aquaculture health economics, for improved responses and more efficient resource allocation.

As mentioned, the PMP/AB can offer

- a solid platform for public-private sector partnership especially in development of biosecurity action plans
- long-term commitment to risk management.
- A range of toolkits to support capacity development and governance.
- And responses conscious to environmental and anthropological challenges, enabling the adoption of sound aquaculture production practices.

Let me re-emphasize that aquaculture production is now almost equal to capture fisheries production, and indeed we consume for culture than captured fish, mollusks and crustaceans. Thus, the need for innovative biosecurity approaches, examples of which were presented in this virtual dialogue – are needed for a healthier and sustainable aquaculture.

In the current COVID-19 environment we are all in, **the health of aquatic food animals should remain relevant and a priority.**

With these, I would like to again express my personal thanks to everyone for your collaboration and support.