

# Red de Acuicultura de las Americas (RAA): The Aquaculture Network of the Americas

## Launching and Initial Programme

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During the fourth Session of COFI Sub-committee on Aquaculture (COFI/AQ IV) held in Puerto Varas, Chile in October 2008, all participating countries representing the American continent, requested FAO to take actions in order to reactivate this long-aspired aquaculture network. In response to such a demand, the FAO Sub-regional Office for South America (SLS), together with the Aquaculture Service (FIRA) organized a workshop to reactivate the initiative, aimed at creating an aquaculture cooperation network in the Americas. ***“In our continent, lots of people live in poverty, and there is inequity in the distribution of natural and economic resources. The RAA can contribute to reduce poverty and bridge the gap between the rich and the poor”.*** The meeting was held from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, 2009 in Guayaquil, Ecuador following the kind invitation of the government of this country. Thirteen countries were represented in the meeting and delegates signed a letter of intent to officially ratify their interest to create the RAA, the Spanish acronym for the Aquaculture Network of the Americas.<sup>1</sup>

After a number of meetings of a provisional council created in Guayaquil and further consultations with the signing governments, the RAA was formally created on 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2010 in Brasilia, Brazil, with the participation of 21 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). This newly created cooperation network is an intergovernmental organization for the sustainable development of the aquaculture in the Americas. Brazil will host the Secretariat of the network for the next four years, for which the country's recently created Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture has

donated USD1 million to execute the priority lines of action agreed by the member countries.

This is also the happy ending of the long effort of FAO (from the region and the headquarters), who sees in this network a new active partner to foster aquaculture growth in the LAC region. During the network launch, FAO Regional Representative for LAC, Mr José Graziano da Silva, reaffirmed the importance of the initiative. *“The idea of an aquaculture network was originated in the area, but we couldn't, until now, organize ourselves to make it a reality”*, said Mr Graziano. Countries from Asia and the Pacific have had their network since 17 years ago. *“Now we have to reach their level of aquaculture cooperation”*, he said.

According to Mr Felipe Matias, the current Network Executive Secretary, this network will contribute to foster the social and developmental role of aquaculture, rather than to its economic character. *“In our continent, lots of people live in poverty, and there is inequity in the distribution of natural and economic resources. The RAA can contribute to reduce poverty and bridge the gap between the rich and the poor”.* Mr Altemir Gregolin, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister of Brazil, emphasized the potential of the Americas when it comes to aquaculture, and the importance of cooperation among countries.



U. Marcelino

Country representatives and participants to the formal signature of the agreement and launching of the RAA. Brasilia, Brazil 25 03 2010

“The RAA has been born strong; we count on the participation of the 21 countries which signed the agreement”, he said. He emphasized the importance of this historic moment in which political integration among Latin American countries is becoming stronger.



U. Marcelino

Brazil Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister, Mr. Altemir Gregolin signing the RAA agreement

Priority activities to be developed by the RAA in the next five years include the following:

- review of the status of aquaculture governance in LAC region;
- creation of an aquaculture regional observatory.
- develop the small-scale, resource-limited aquaculture sub-sector of the region in cooperation with FAO;
- expand markets for LAC aquaculture products; and
- publish a directory of aquaculture research and training centers in the region.

The network web page offers additional information on current and future activities <http://www.racua.org/index.php?lang=EN>

Further information can be obtained by email from the authors. ■

<sup>1</sup>More information on this meeting can be found in the Meeting Report <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i1561b/i1561b00.pdf>



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Participants in the meeting with FAO officer (left) and with RAA Secretary (right)

Brazil will host the RAA Secretariat and headquarters until 2014, and will handle the infrastructure and its logistic support. For the next four years, the main issue within the action plan will be to contribute to reduce poverty and increase food security in the continent through aquaculture.