

# GCP/KYR/003/FIN

## “Support to fishery and aquaculture management in the Kyrgyz Republic”

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The Government of Kyrgyzstan recognizes the importance of the fisheries sector and the value of fish as a healthy product and an important component in the people's diet. Through aquaculture promotion and inland fisheries

development, the government sees opportunities for poverty reduction, livelihood improvement and diversification of rural employment both for men and women.

This new Trust Fund project aims to support the implementation of the Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Development and Management in Kyrgyzstan (2008-2012) which was approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Processing Industry in February 2008.

The strategy has the following four overall goals of:

- using of the aquatic resources to contribute to the national economy, poverty alleviation and food security;
- augmenting the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture in generating socio-economic benefits and improving the wellbeing of the rural population;
- improving the economic viability of aquaculture farms through diversification of production in accordance with market demand; and
- increasing the availability of high quality fishery products for the domestic market, but also including increased production of low price fish for the popular consumption in the rural areas.

The present inland capture fisheries and aquaculture production in the Kyrgyz Republic is only about 10 percent of what it used to be in 1980s before the Soviet Union disintegration. Opportunities for the



*Rainbow trout*

sector lay in the fact that the consumer demand for fisheries and aquaculture products in the country is increasing with increasing incomes and growing health concerns of the modern population. The Kyrgyz Government is highly interested in implementing similar aquaculture based fish marketing systems as Finland created in the past.

The Government of Finland approved in May 2009 a USD2.2 million project; implementation started immediately with the First Steering Committee meeting.

A second major activity took place in September when the project organized a national workshop “Biodiversity Friendly Fisheries Management Regime (BDFMR) and Fisheries Co-Management” in close cooperation with the UNDP/GEF project Strengthening Policy and Regulatory Framework for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Fishery Sector. The aim of this workshop was to discuss what new policies are necessary to make BDFMR and viable co-management options for Kyrgyzstan. The key problem addressed by the workshop was that of unsustainable management of fisheries and other natural resources at local level.

Some 40 people from various stakeholder groups attended this 3-day workshop held from 10 to 12 September 2009, in Cholpon-Ata Ecocentre at the Issyk-Kul Lake. FAO was represented by

Ms Cassandra de Young of the Development and Planning Service of FAO's Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture and Raymon Van Anrooy of the FAO Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia.

Issyk-Kul is the world's second largest mountain lake which has many problems, but most importantly the introductions of some new (alien) predatory species are blamed to have caused the disappearance of many endemic species, like naked osman (*Gymnodiptychus dybowskii*) and Issyk-Kul marinka (*Schizothorax pseudoaksaiensis issykkuli*). Lately, tension has been growing against rainbow trout cage culture. Eight companies are growing this species in 26 cages. Fishermen and environmentalists claim that a lot of fish have escaped from the cages and free rainbow trout are causing further damage to the endemics. The truth may not be that simple, as very intensive irrigation development took place in the country during the last 30 years and heavy water abstraction led to reduced water-levels and the drying of many of the incoming streams previously used by endemic fish species for spawning.

However, close cooperation is needed between UNDP/GEF and FAO projects in order to avoid misunderstandings as FAO project supports the fish farming and the UNDP/GEF sees this as a big danger to all endemic fish species at the Issyk-Kul Lake. Luckily, the FAO Project has already been able to assist the UNDP/GEF project in searching and capturing some of the most endangered species in order to reproduce these species in captivity for restocking purposes.

The proposal for a new biodiversity-friendly fisheries management regime for Issyk-Kul Lake was presented and was considered a good basis for the discussions on the integrated aquatic resources management of the lake, and particularly the management of fisheries. An Issyk-Kul Lake Fisheries Management Plan should be developed in a participatory manner with all stakeholders, which will include guidance (based on scientific evidence where possible) on management tools to be applied (including establishment and enforcement of closed areas and seasons, fishing gear regulations, restocking of endangered indigenous fish species, aquaculture production limits, etc.). The management plan should include all subtractive sectors (commercial, subsistence and recreational fisheries) and aquaculture. The development of such a management plan should be supervised by the Fishery Advisory Council.

It was strongly urged that the two projects (UNDP/GEF and FAO) should be implemented without further delay and that they coordinate their efforts to the fullest extent. Capacity building should be at the core of the project activities.



*Naked osman*

The proposal to establish sustainable integrated fish culture extension services in the Issyk-Kul oblast should be technically supported by both projects, and will include Best Management Practices (BMP) development.

Fisheries co-management, in terms of sharing management responsibility for aquatic biodiversity and fisheries resources of the Issyk-Kul Lake, is the most appropriate option to achieve the environmental, economic and social objectives of the stakeholders. In particular, the workshop participants agreed that the relevant authorities at national and local levels, research institutes and the communities around Issyk-Kul Lake would benefit from developing partnerships. It was recognized that co-management would only be successful if all stakeholders are committed to it and if the appropriate legal and policy frameworks are in place.

Fisheries co-management initiatives should be piloted with support from the above two projects in one or two areas in Issyk-Kul Lake, based on lessons learned in other parts of the world, while ensuring that these initiatives are appropriate to the local cultural and social contexts.

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