

TCP/CMR/3103

Formulation of a development plan for sustainable aquaculture in Cameroon

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BACKGROUND

Fish farming in Cameroon started in 1948, since then, the country has had several projects and a variety of different programmes to encourage the adoption of fish farming. However, characterized by multiple ad hoc and uncoordinated interventions which promoted subsistence fish farming, the sector has remained modest in the country's economy. Some of the main factors affecting performance are: inappropriate policies; lack of strategies and plans for the sustainable development of the sector; investment difficulties; lack of fish processing industries; and insufficient and/or low seed quality. To capitalise on the country's natural assets and recognizing the strategic importance aquaculture could have in increasing incomes and food security, the government of Cameroon requested the assistance of FAO to prepare a strategic framework for the sustainable development of aquaculture. This strategy was formulated in May 2003 by a team of experts from MINEPIA (Ministère de l'élevage, des pêches et des industries animales), the Institute of Agricultural Research for Development (IRAD), World Fish Center (WFC) and FAO. The framework laid out a number of key orientations to promote the sustainable development of aquaculture in Cameroon and defined the roles of the public and private sectors in achieving the country's vision for aquaculture development. The operationalisation of the strategic framework, i.e. the formulation of a practical development plan for the sector, is now the next step, and one for which the government of Cameroon requested additional assistance to FAO under TCP/CMR/3103 Formulation of a development plan for sustainable aquaculture in Cameroon (Mise en place d'un plan de développement durable de l'aquaculture).

OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The main objective of this TCP is to assist the MINEPIA to elaborate a plan for the sustainable development of aquaculture, supported by practical examples of profitable aquaculture to ensure that the plan is grounded in reality. Capacity building of selected farmers and government officials is also a major thrust of the project.

The expected project results are:

A plan for the development of aquaculture, prepared and validated by a national workshop and approved by competent authorities;

The piloting of production techniques, including fingerling production, on six sites selected in zones with high potential for aquaculture development, to demonstrate profitable and durable technologies to fish farmers.

Additional outputs from the project include: a detailed sectoral review, capacity building for at least 60 aquaculturists on business plans for aquaculture and basic hatchery techniques and the creation of a digital map for aquaculture in Cameroon to illustrate current aquaculture locations and identify areas with potential for development per province.



Fish ponds for culture of Nile tilapia, African catfish and African bonytongue, Cameroon



Hatchery facilities are essential with simple and low-cost solutions preferred by the farmers

PROGRESS SO FAR

The project effectively started in July 2008 and is due to be completed in December 2009. Its innovative approach to the formulation of a development Plan for the sector was based on the iterative process undertaken, whereby draft documents have been successively reviewed and modified by multi-disciplinary committees and groups of resource persons. In addition, the concomitant running of pilot sites and collection of farm data (technical and economic) and farmers feedback, ensured the inclusion of all perspectives and the technical relevance of the activities listed in the Plan. In particular, the holding of many training workshops participated by farmers, extensionists and government officials have been found particularly useful, highlighting the thirst of knowledge and enthusiasm for the activity. It is indeed a premise in the Plan that capacity building will be a cornerstone in the successful development of the sector and that through it, many of the sector's current bottlenecks will be addressed.

Progress towards achieving the project outputs had been satisfactory. The sectoral review was finalised and its contents fed into the Plan drafting process. At the time of writing, the development Plan itself was still under elaboration and shall be reviewed once more by the project committee and the group of resource persons before being officially presented to the MINEPIA in a final workshop at the end of

2009. The identification of areas with potential for aquaculture is being finalised with the production of paper and digital maps and an analysis using data and tools developed by the WFC¹ and FIMAs African Water Resource Database². New data collected at country level will also be used to complement Cameroon's National Aquaculture Sector Overview (NASO)³ with a Google map showing the location of aquaculture sites and their characteristics at an individual farm level.

CONCLUSION

Cameroon has recognized the importance of planning for the sustainable development of aquaculture and, since the inception of the project, other African countries have followed suite. It is hoped, and expected, that during its duration (5 years upon adoption), the implementation of the Plan, to which the country is committed, will lead to significant changes in the aquaculture sector, not only in terms of increased outputs, but also in terms of change in the perception of the respective roles of the public and private sectors, coupled with a move towards a more commercially-oriented management of aquaculture operations.

¹WFC project on Recommendation Domains for Pond

²Aquaculture (www.fao.org/fishery/gisfish/id/4815)

³www.fao.org/fishery/gisfish/id/2389

³NASO for Cameroon: www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/naso_cameroun/fr