

13th Session of the Convention on Biological Diversity's SBSTTA

From 18 to 22 February 2008, the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) 13th Session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) will be held at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. This session of the SBSTTA will have a particularly full agenda with regard to fishery- and aquaculture-related issues, among which include an in-depth review of the implementation of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity, covering *inter alia* thematic areas such as integrated aquaculture or rice-fish farming. There will also be parallel sessions on scientific and technical issues of relevance to the implementation of the 2010 target, including:

- ▶ marine and coastal biodiversity: options for preventing and mitigating the impact of some activities to selected seabed habitats and ecological criteria and biogeographical classification systems for marine areas in need of protection;
- ▶ biological diversity of inland water ecosystems: recent developments on Ramsar site designation criteria, streamlining the work and harmonization of national reporting frameworks between the CBD and the Ramsar Convention;

- ▶ invasive alien species: report on consultations regarding international standards;
- ▶ climate change: options for mutually supportive actions addressing climate change within the three Rio conventions and
- ▶ new and emerging issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity: *modus operandi* for addressing new and emerging issues.

Within the framework of FAO's Interdepartmental Working Group on Biodiversity, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department is looking forward to contribute to this event through two proposed side events on (a) Ecosystem approach to capture fisheries and (b) Protecting biodiversity through an ecosystem approach to aquaculture and enhanced aquatic biosecurity. The Department will also contribute to the sessions on Biodiversity and Nutrition and Invasive Alien Species.

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Organic Aquaculture

Organic agriculture is no longer a phenomenon in developed countries only, as it is commercially practiced in 120 countries, representing 31 million ha of certified croplands and pastures (~ 0.7 percent of global agricultural lands), 62 million ha of certified wild lands (for organic collection of bamboo shoots, wild berries, mushrooms and nuts) and a market of US\$40 billion in 2006" - this statement was underlined by FAO at an International Conference on Organic Agriculture and Food Security held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy from 3 to 5 May 2007. Interestingly, although difficult to quantify, it is believed that non-certified organic systems

(e.g. indigenous models that follow organic principles by intent or by default) of several million small farmers may represent at least an equivalent share in subsistence agriculture of developing countries.

Organic fish production is now taking place in most regions of the world. The share of organic fish products is comparatively small compared to organic agriculture products and clearly the (certified) output is only a tiny fraction of the world's aquaculture production, but the number of producers and variety of products is steadily increasing. This trend was also obvious at this year's BioFach, the world's biggest organic trade fair, where producers, retailers and certifiers of organic aquaculture

met in February 2007. As in conventional aquaculture, much of the discussions in the organic aquaculture sub-sector center on certification, feeds and alternatives to fishmeal protein sources and general sustainability issues. For quite some time this niche sector is predicted to be supply constrained. As far as measures and conditions necessary for implementation of production rules are concerned, there are a number of national and private standards available which are in need of harmonization. Organic aquaculture regulations in the biggest import market, the EU, are under negotiation but will not apply before 2009. Further information may be obtained from M Halwart at Matthias.Halwart@fao.org