

Near East and North Africa A Glance on the Development of Aquaculture

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The region covered by the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa extends across a wide and dispersed geographical area which includes different marine and freshwater ecosystems and fisheries with different characteristics and complexity. This FAO Region expands from the East Central Atlantic Ocean on the west, the large expanse of the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea and the arid and dry highlands of Central Asia in the east, as well as regional seas (such as the southern and eastern Mediterranean Sea), national and regional rivers, lakes and various bodies of water.

At present, many countries in the region are engaged in aquaculture production, based mostly on the culture of low value, freshwater finfish in inland rural communities. These exist within semi-intensive or extensive farming systems that use moderate to low levels of production inputs and produce large quantities of affordable food fish for domestic markets and home consumption. Brackishwater culture is by far the most important practice in the region followed by freshwater culture and mariculture. Aquaculture production in the region is led by Egypt; the Islamic Republic of Iran is a distant second. Some countries are also engaged in the production of high value freshwater and marine species such as sturgeon and shrimp [e.g. shrimp farming in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)].



A. LOVATELLI, FAO

Grouper broodstock

Aquaculture production continues to grow and there is good potential for expansion particularly in most Arab nations where research and development of mariculture is underway. The Islamic Republic of Iran has considerable potential for increasing its aquaculture production. The major constraint for intensive aquaculture is the shortage of experienced personnel and the absence of well developed feed processing.

Only eight countries equal or surpass international average per capita fish consumption. With the uncertain potential for increasing fish supply from marine and inland capture fisheries, the future supply of fish in the Near East Region most likely will depend on aquaculture. There are, however, environmental, technical, economic and legal constraints of varying degrees that need to be overcome in many countries if aquaculture is to develop. Nevertheless, aquaculture will continue to expand, both in terms of quantity and quality, due to its economic importance and its quantifiable contribution to helping countries fill the growing gap between supply and demand of fisheries products.

The region benefits from the support provided by two FAO regional fisheries management organizations through their subsidiary bodies specifically dealing with aquaculture: the Working Group on Aquaculture (WGA) of the Regional Commission for Fisheries (RECOFI) and the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). Moreover, some initiatives are being implemented

with the support of FAO some of which are described below.

Support to the Saharan aquaculture and valorization of salt ponds: The project (TCP/ALG/3103 *Appui au Développement de l'Aquaculture Saharienne*) is aimed to promote planning and development of desert aquaculture in Algeria. This will be mostly based on intensive tilapia culture. The initiative of supporting the Saharan aquaculture relies on significant freshwater and brackishwater resources available from deep ground water tables currently used for irrigation. Besides, the salt ponds occurring in the semi-arid regions are expected to be used for *Artemia* production. It is believed that the establishment of Saharan aquaculture in Algeria will contribute to economic development, improvement of food supply and diversification through increased availability of animal protein in the diet of the local population.

Western and Central Asian Artemia Reference Centre: The agreement for the establishment of the "Western and Central Asian Artemia Reference Centre" (WCAARC) was signed by the Iran Fisheries Research Organization (IFRO) and the FAO in May 2008 (UTF/IRA/061/IRA). The Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly the Urmieh Lake, is one of the most affluent sources of *Artemia* in the world. It is expected that WCAARC will serve as a centre for the coordination of *Artemia* research and extension activities in the countries of Western and Central Asia. The new Centre will be located in the premises of the Iranian *Artemia* Research Centre in Golmankhaneh on the shores of Lake Urmieh. The establishment of WCAARC offers a unique opportunity to bring together leading *Artemia* scientists and creating a global network to exchange ideas and knowledge on technical issues.

Support to the Fish Farming Centre in Jeddah, KSA: FAO has recently renewed its agreement with the KSA (UTFN/SAU/017/SAU) to provide technical advice in support of the Fish Farming Centre in Jeddah (pages 22-23, FAN 39) which was established to develop suitable aquaculture technologies and to provide support to the private sector. The main objectives of the current project are to support technical and scientific capacity, to develop and improve hatchery and on-growing technologies (including offshore cage culture) for selected marine finfish (e.g. groupers), to produce superior quality of white shrimp (*Ferropenaeus indicus*) breeders, and to improve the information dissemination system of the Center. The project started in 2007 and will run for five years.

Reinforcement of the role of women in the culture of clams: FAO and the Government of Tunisia have recently signed a Technical Cooperation Project (TCP/TUN/3203 – *Renforcement du rôle de la femme dans la filière pêche à pied de la palourde*) to support the expansion of clam farming in this southern Mediterranean nation. The project aims also at supporting and improving the role of women in this sector and to ensure a rational and responsible use of the resources.

RECENTLY COMPLETED EVENTS (continued from page 7)

April 2008

- RECOFI Regional Technical Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health, 5-10 April 2008, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Alessandro.Lovatelli@fao.org/
Melba.Reantaso@fao.org
- FAO Expert Consultation on Climate Change and Fisheries and Aquaculture, 7-9 April 2008, Rome, Italy.
Doris.Soto@fao.org/Cecile.Brugere@fao.org
- FAO Workshop on the Development of an Aquatic Biosecurity Framework for Southern Africa, 22-24 April 2008, Lilongwe, Malawi. Rohana.Subasinghe@fao.org/
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May 2008

- FAO/NACA Consultative Workshop on Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification, 6-8 May 2008, Beijing, China.
Rohana.Subasinghe@fao.org/Jiansan.Jia@fao.org
- FAO/MIMRA National Workshop on Risk Assessment in Aquaculture Development (TCPF/MAS/3101), 13-15 May 2008, Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands.
Masanami.Izumi@fao.org/Melba.Reantaso@fao.org
- Western Balkan Regional Seminar/Workshop on Aquatic Animal Health and Project Terminal Workshop (TCP/BiH/3101), 20-23 May 2008, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Melba.Reantaso@fao.org
- 25th Session of EIFAC, including Symposium on Interactions between Social, Economic and Ecological Objectives of Inland Commercial and Recreational Fisheries and Aquaculture 21-28 May 2008, Antalya, Turkey.
Gerd.Marmulla@fao.org/Uwe.Barg@fao.org/
Raymon.Vananrooy@fao.org/Thomas.Mothpoulsen@fao.org
- FAO Consultative Workshop on Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification, 29-30 May 2008, Silver Springs, Maryland, USA.
Rohana.Subasinghe@fao.org/Lahsen.Ababouch@fao.org

August 2008

- APFIC 2nd Regional Consultative Forum (RCFM) "Promoting effective arrangements for managing fisheries and aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region", 6-9 August 2008, Manado, Indonesia. Simon.FungeSmith@fao.org

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