

Data Collection, Packaging and Dissemination of Aquaculture Information¹

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INTRODUCTION

This article provides an overview (through some examples) on the approach used by the FAO Department Fisheries and Aquaculture to produce and disseminate aquaculture information such as databases, online publications, and the FAO fisheries technical papers, circulars and reports. All FAO products are subject to a meticulous validation process ensuring the use of current internationally accepted publication standards to which the FAO house style guidelines are based, ensuring the accuracy of information and paying particular attention to user needs and preferences including development of tools to facilitate information sharing. This article highlights the complex process and the high costs required to produce high quality information which is sometimes unrecognized.

REPORTING AQUACULTURE STATISTICS

At the international level, FAO plays a unique role in preparing and reporting global aquaculture statistics as well as aquaculture trends. Such reports are important in alerting regional organizations, national policy makers and advisors, industry, NGOs, and the general public on global aquaculture status and trends and emerging issues that can have effects at the regional and national levels.

Aquaculture statistics are collected through standardized questionnaires (on aquaculture production systems and production by species) which are regularly sent to the National Focal

Points of competent authorities in each FAO member country. They are responsible for the compilation of responses to the questionnaires through their own national mechanisms for statistical data collection and timely submission to FAO. Once received, data are entered into the aquaculture database (FishStat Plus), validated, analysed and disseminated through the FAO Yearbook of Fishery Statistics, FAO Web site (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/statistics/global-aquaculture-production/query>)

Some of the major challenges include development of national and regional capacities in collecting and reporting such statistical data as well as promoting improved approaches and techniques for data collection. FAO continuously develops unified standards and guidelines for data collection and analysis and assists countries in capacity building.

WEB-BASED PUBLICATIONS

The Department's web-based publications on aquaculture include the National Aquaculture Sector Overviews (NASO), the Cultured Aquatic Species Fact Sheets and the National Aquaculture Legislation Overviews (NALO). The preparation of these information sheets follows a rigorous process involving using a standard template for the required information and various layers of experts until publication. For example for NASO, described briefly are the processes involved: (i) the FIMA Information Officer, responsible for over-all coordination, critical review of questionnaire returns, closely

interacts and liaise with NASO authors for the required revision, if any; (ii) the NASO author, a national aquaculture expert, responsible for collecting information at national level and filling up of questionnaires; (iii) the language editors (for English, French and Spanish) responsible for reviewing draft documents for style, language, grammar and terminology, (iv) the FIMA technical officers responsible for final checking and validating according to his/her area of expertise, paying particular attention to accuracy, political implication, technical correctness and clarity, (v) a GIS consultant responsible for preparing spatial datasets, and (vi) an XML editor responsible for converting each NASO from MS-Word to XML-HTML and uploading of the information in the Web site.

Once published the fact sheets are sent for translation into other (outside the original language used) FAO official languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese). These information sheets are available at the Aquaculture Gateway Page (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/aquaculture>).

THE STATE OF THE WORLD FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE (SOFIA)

Prepared under the coordination of a team consisting of staff members from the Department and a consultant, SOFIA is the main flagship publication of the Department. Printed in hard copy and contains a CD-ROM with the World Fisheries and Aquaculture Atlas, SOFIA consists of 4 parts: Part 1 – World review of fisheries and aquaculture,

Part 2 – Selected issues in fisheries and aquaculture, Part 3 – Highlights of special studies and Part 4 – Outlook. FIMA officers and relevant regional aquaculture officers contribute to this publication highlighting outcomes of selected aquaculture studies and themes and particularly aquaculture trends and emerging issues in the Outlook section. SOFIA is available in electronic format at: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/sofia/en>

FAO FISHERIES TECHNICAL PAPERS

The FAO Fisheries Technical Papers (FTPs) form one of the main regular and most popular publication series of the Department. The first volume was published in 1958 and more than 500 volumes in this series have now been published; new publications are made available in full-text in hard copies, CD-ROM and internet.

The FTP series are usually prepared by technical officers themselves or a commissioned author/s supervised by the officer/s. The arguments treated by these serial publications are those reflected in the Department's Programme of Work, related to the recommendations provided by FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and the Sub-committee on Aquaculture (SCA), as carried out through the various normative work and field programme activities. The document passes through several stages of quality control (e.g. technical, editorial and lay-out design) prior to final publication, archiving in the FAO document repository and uploading in the Web site. Aside from the technical quality, the control process is concerned with the correct use of the FAO publication style guidelines, language correctness, and political implication. The series are often published in more than one FAO official language based on the geographical importance of the treated subject. All FAO FTPs are available at the Department's Web site at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/CDrom/TechPapV2/techpap.htm> (from 1969 to 2004) and at: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/publications/technical-papers/en> from 2003 onward.

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Box 1. Examples of FAO Publications on Aquaculture

- FAO. 2006. State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2006. FAO. Rome. 162 pp.
- FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. State of world aquaculture 2006. *FAO Fisheries Technical Paper*. No. 500. Rome, FAO. 2006. 134 pp.
- Morales Q., V.V.; Morales R., R. *Síntesis regional del desarrollo de la acuicultura. 1. América Latina y el Caribe – 2005/Regional review on aquaculture development. 1. Latin America and the Caribbean – 2005*. FAO Circular de Pesca/FAO Fisheries Circular. No. 1017/1. Roma/Rome, FAO. 2006. 177 pp.
- Poynton, S.L. *Regional review on aquaculture development. 2. Near East and North Africa – 2005*. FAO Fisheries Circular. No. 1017/2. Rome, FAO. 2006. 79 pp.
- Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific. *Regional review on aquaculture development. 3. Asia and the Pacific – 2005*. FAO Fisheries Circular. No. 1017/3. Rome, FAO. 2006. 97 pp.
- Hecht, T. *Regional review on aquaculture development. 4. Sub-Saharan Africa – 2005*. FAO Fisheries Circular. No. 1017/4. Rome, FAO. 2006. 96 pp.
- FAO/Network of Aquaculture Centres in Central-Eastern Europe (NACEE). *Regional review on aquaculture development. 5. Central and Eastern European region – 2005*. FAO Fisheries Circular. No. 1017/5. Rome, FAO. 2007. 84 pp.
- Rana, K.J. *Regional review on aquaculture development. 6. Western-European region – 2005*. FAO Fisheries Circular. No. 1017/6. Rome, FAO. 2007. 56 pp. Contains a CD-ROM.
- Olin, P.G. *Regional review on aquaculture development. 7. North America – 2005*. FAO Fisheries Circular. No. 1017/7. Rome, FAO. 2006. 25 pp.

FAO FISHERIES CIRCULARS AND REPORTS/STATE OF WORLD AQUACULTURE

FAO Fisheries Circulars and Reports generally present the outcomes of meetings and/or expert consultations/workshops. Circulars represent the official document used to disseminate the reports of sessions of COFI/SCA, Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) and RFB's Working Groups; they can be also multilingual. Both reports follow the same quality control process as for FTPs with an additional layer whereby the final report is checked and endorsed by the respective bodies prior to final printing and distribution. Included under the same series are the regional reviews of aquaculture development status and trends produced on a regular basis. The regional reviews are conducted through a series of national and regional level consultations covering the seven FAO regions (i.e. Asia and the Pacific, Near East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, North America, Latin American and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe and Western Europe) and supported by information contained in the NASOs. The review process involves several iteration and participation by many national, regional and international

experts and culminates in a flagship publication "The State of World Aquaculture", an FAO Fisheries Technical Paper which is published on a regular basis.

FAO AQUACULTURE NEWSLETTERS (FAN)

The first issue of the FAO Aquaculture Newsletter or FAN was released in June 1992. Prior to this, the FAO Aquaculture Bulletin (1968-1977) and the "ADCP Aquaculture Minutes" (1988-1990) were the antecedents of FAN. Beginning 2008, FAN is issued thrice a year (April, August and December). FAN provides information on a broad range of topics of relevance to aquaculture in general, as well as socio-economic, food safety and trade related articles and events. FAN also provides our readers up-to-date information on various activities/events and projects both from FAO normative work and field programmes as well as significant developments and emerging issues affecting the aquaculture sector. Occasionally, special issues are dedicated to high-level events/sessions, e.g. Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (FAN 35, June 2006 and 40 – this issue, August 2008), High Level Special Event on Aquaculture (FAN 38, November 2007).