

FAO supported a symposium on “Small-scale aquaculture for increasing resilience of rural livelihood in Nepal”

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The Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Puspa Kamal Dahal, giving the inaugural address to the Symposium on Small-Scale Aquaculture for Increasing Resilience of Rural Livelihoods in Nepal, held in Kathmandu from 5 to 6 February 2009

Nepal is a landlocked country. Inland capture fisheries and aquaculture are the sole domestic source of fish products for Nepalese people who have traditional preference for fish and other aquatic products. Over the years, aquaculture has developed as the fastest growing food production sector of Nepal although it is a relatively new farming activity in the country. Aquaculture production increased from 3 265 metric tonnes in 1985 up to 25 409 metric tonnes in 2006 (FAO, 2008)¹. It has become the major supplier of fish products accounting for 55.94 percent of the total fish production for the Nepalese people in 2006. Aquaculture in Nepal is basically small scale, contributing not only to the national fish supply but also contributing significantly to rural livelihood with about 2.47 percent contribution to the agricultural gross domestic product (AGDP). Small-scale aquaculture operations, such as

integration of pond aquaculture to existing crop/livestock-based farming system is believed to be effective in increasing local fish supply and diversifying livelihood options of small-holder farmers in terai and mid-hill valleys, thereby also increasing resilience of rural livelihoods in Nepal.

The role of small-scale aquaculture in household food security and nutrition, income generation and empowerment of women and marginalized communities has been increasingly appreciated in recent years. A few pilot projects implemented in terai and mid-hill valleys have been successful in demonstrating the viability of small-scale aquaculture systems in the country.

In order to provide a forum for presenting recent findings in research and development initiatives on small-scale aquaculture and discussing key policy issues and research needs for collaboration in support

of the small-scale aquaculture sector amongst policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders, a symposium on “Small-scale Aquaculture for Increasing Resilience of Rural Livelihoods in Nepal” was jointly organized by a number of national and international institutions from 5 to 6 February 2009 at the Radison Hotel in Kathmandu.

The symposium was turned into a real bright-spot event of aquaculture development in Nepal largely due to the great importance attached by the Nepalese government. The Honourable Prime Minister, Mr. Puspa Kamal Dahal, formally inaugurated the symposium with an opening address, a great demonstration of the strong political will on the part of the Nepalese government to promote small-scale aquaculture in Nepal. The Prime Minister indicated, in his speech, that small-scale aquaculture may solve the problems associated

with malnutrition and poverty, giving rural populations with self-employment opportunities. The symposium attracted wide interest from a large number of government institutions and international, regional and non-governmental organizations. The symposium accommodated nearly 40 presentations which covered policy issues, recent findings of research and development activities on small-scale aquaculture in Nepal and the region. The symposium also provided an important platform for identifying key constraints to the development of small-scale aquaculture in Nepal and the appropriate coping strategies.

As support to the symposium, FAO's Regional Aquaculture Officer for Asia and the Pacific participated in the symposium and made a presentation entitled "Development of Small-scale Aquaculture in Highland and Remote Areas: An Opportunity for Aquaculture Development in Nepal", which covered major aspects related to small-scale aquaculture development from FAO point of view, such as concept and roles of small-scale aquaculture and constraints to and coping strategies for small-scale aquaculture development in Nepal and the region. He also assured that FAO would provide technical

and policy support to the efforts of the Nepalese government in promoting small-scale aquaculture whenever possible.

The symposium identified inadequate supply of high quality fish seed as the key technical constraint and weak coordination between the different sectors in using water resource for aquaculture development as the key institutional constraint to developing small-scale aquaculture for increasing resilience of rural livelihood in Nepal. An appeal was made to the government, national and international organizations to take harmonized efforts to overcome the constraints. This symposium was a historical event in the development of aquaculture. It is going to have great impact on the development of the industry and contribute to national food and nutritional security and rural livelihood in Nepal.

¹FAO. 2008. FAO Fishstat. FAO, Rome

NEW STAFF PROFILE



Mr Xiaowei Zhou is a Chinese national. He graduated with his degree in fisheries and aquaculture from Shanghai Fisheries University (renamed as Shanghai Ocean University now) in 1983. In 1986 he finished his postgraduate study with a M.Sc. in aquaculture from the Fisheries College, University of Philippines. He worked as a research assistant and then research associate at the Freshwater Fisheries Research Centre, Chinese Academy of Fisheries Sciences from 1986-1993. The major research projects he was involved include the nutritional studies of major freshwater aquaculture species in China, feed formulation and feeding strategy for various polyculture farming models. As his part time duty during that period, he also served as coordinator and as well as trainer for the annually offered international training programme on integrated fish farming initiated by the Aquaculture Development Coordination Programme of FAO and the Chinese Government.

Since 1994, Xiaowei has worked as Programme Officer and then one of the Programme managers at the Secretariat of an regional inter-governmental organization, the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA) which is based in Bangkok, Thailand. As one of the core professional staff at NACA for the past 15 years, he was closely involved in various projects development, planning and implementation in the Asia-Pacific region, covering a wide range of technical areas of aquaculture and related subjects. During his service in NACA, he participated and implemented many FAO-NACA joint activities in aquaculture. In recent years, he helped in organizing a number of workshops for FAO, such as the FAO workshops on use of alien species in aquaculture, review of mariculture status and development needs, and global review of status and trends of aquaculture.

In March 2009, Mr. Zhou was appointed the Fishery Statistician (Aquaculture) at the Fisheries and Aquaculture Information and Statistics Service, Fisheries and Aquaculture Economics and Policy Division, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department at FAO Headquarters. Within the fishery and aquaculture statistical group, he is responsible for FAO aquaculture production statistical data. He can be reached by email at xiaowei.zhou@fao.org or by telephone at +39 06 5705 5244.