

ABOUT THIS CD

Aquatic resources derived from rice fields and associated environments often contribute a large share of the animal protein and other nutrients intake of poor households, particularly in Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, although this dietary contribution is self-evident for those working in the field, the importance of aquatic resources in the food security of rural households is generally underestimated and undervalued because the local consumption or marketing usually prevents this production from entering official national statistics. This information, however, is needed by policy makers when formulating pro-poor policies or making resource allocation decisions. Development plans that ignore agricultural biodiversity and only focus on increasing yields of rice may possibly give the people more rice to eat, but may at the same time take away much of the aquatic animals and plants also harvested from and around the rice fields. Without a sound understanding of the other components of the ricefield ecosystem and careful consideration of suitable extension there is a great risk that the aquatic animal and plant diversity can be severely affected. Importantly, it will be the poorer segments of rural society which will suffer most from the negative impacts of such development.

Given this scenario, and the timely financial support to regular programme resources received by the Government of the Netherlands through the FAO Inter-Departmental Working Group on Biodiversity, the Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service of the FAO Fisheries Department initiated a series of studies on the availability and use of aquatic organisms in rice-based farming as well as on the tradition and current practices of rice-fish farming.

This CD-ROM on Aquatic Biodiversity in Rice-based Ecosystems contains the findings of these studies conducted in Cambodia, China, Laos and Viet Nam. The studies were prepared by the authors and guest editors under the coordination of the series editors M. Halwart and D. Bartley who developed the concept and orientation of the studies, contracted their preparation, and provided the final inputs and revisions. In addition, this CD-ROM contains a 'further reading' section with selected relevant reference texts and documents.

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