

A  
Special Service  
for  
Fisheries Researchers  
in  
Developing Countries  
from  
ICLARM

A  
**SELECTIVE  
INFORMATION  
SERVICE**

**A** Selective Fisheries Information Service was first announced in our April 1984 Newsletter. It is a free question/answer service to researchers in tropical developing countries who are working in subject areas in which ICLARM has special expertise—finfish and mollusc aquaculture, integrated farming, small-scale fisheries and resource management.

The Service is being run jointly by project leader Rosalinda Temprosa, ICLARM's Chief Librarian, and project coordinator Jay Maclean, Chief of the Center's Information Service. Norma Jhocson, librarian, is in control of assembling information and running computer searches.

Backstopping the project are the full resources of ICLARM's library, the expertise of the Center's scientific staff and the facility for online searching of overseas computer databases such as Biological Abstracts and Aquatic Science and Fisheries Abstracts.

The Selective Information Service is now 12 months old.

Response to the Service has been ideal from ICLARM's point of view.

# ICLARM's Selective Information Service - One Year Old

The number of enquiries totalled 170 for the 12 months, increasing gradually as news of the Service spread (see graph), but not reaching an unmanageable size.

Information packages sent to enquirers typically include a reference list generated from library or online computer searching, xeroxes of some important articles and often relevant publications from ICLARM's technical series. After all, much of the Center's expertise has been recorded in articles and books published by ICLARM. In this regard, copies of ICLARM's list of about 250 "Contributions" are sometimes included in packages. Finally, we endeavor to provide names and addresses of other people working in the same subject area as the enquirer in the hope of reducing the isolation researchers in developing countries often feel. Along with the package goes a postcard questionnaire through which we ask the recipient how useful the information was.

Twenty postcards have been returned to the Service so far with nearly all respondents ticking the "very useful" or "most of what was needed" box. Nevertheless there have been a few "inadequate" responses.

Records are kept of the various enquiries, such that we can identify trends and important research areas. By far the most requested subject is tilapia, while integrated farming and socioeconomic aspects are clearly becoming important topics.

The geographical pattern of enquiries (see pie diagram) is much the same as that of the ICLARM Newsletter distribution. In the Service's second year an

effort is planned to stimulate more enquiries from African and Latin American researchers.

The Selective Information Service is able to respond to trends through preparation of bibliographies and even commissioning reviews in important subjects. So far, one review is in preparation, on salt-water tilapia culture, while an updated bibliography on the tilapias has been published and several library-generated bibliographies are on hand.

When the Service was first announced in the ICLARM Newsletter, it was accompanied by news about other related information services. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada was responsible for funding ICLARM's Service as well as a number of the other services, and there has been some interaction between them, giving opportunities for sharing the benefits of experience. Hopefully, a loose network will develop to ensure that enquirers get the best help.

ICLARM's Selective Information Service again invites enquiries relating to finfish and mollusc aquaculture, integrated farming, small-scale fisheries and resource management. The service is free but we would appreciate your returning the questionnaire postcards included with your information package. There is no limit to the number of times you may use the Service. Keep enquiries as specific as possible.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Send your enquiry to Selective Information Service, ICLARM, P.O. Box 1501, Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines.

