

Aquaculture's Unrealised Potential

An ASARECA funded partnership learning programme
for the fisheries sector

Despite global hunger declining, the number of people going hungry in Africa remains high, with 30% of people reported to be undernourished in 2010. Fish is an important source of food for many African people, providing around 18% of animal protein intake, but with a growing and rapidly urbanizing population and capture fisheries largely reaching their limit, many African countries are now looking towards aquaculture to supply an increasing demand for fish.



The potential of aquaculture to reduce poverty and hunger has been recognised in Africa. However, growth in the sector has been limited up-to-now, providing less than 2% of total fish production. In Eastern and Central Africa, the slow growth has been caused by a number of factors, including a development focus on resource poor farmers rather than small and medium enterprises, a lack of focus on the entire fish value chain (feed, seed, processing and marketing), as well as weak governance and policy environments.

Under a project funded by the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), five partner organizations are working together to look not only at fish production, but also beyond the fish farm to help enable the aquaculture sector in the region to reach its potential to reduce poverty and hunger. ■

CONNECTING THE LINKS

“ Building public private sector partnership to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of aquaculture in the ECA region ”

By focusing not only on farming fish, but also on other operations that are vital to a more productive sector (feed, seed and marketing), the project “Building public private sector partnership to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of aquaculture in the ECA region” is aimed at improving production, accessibility, profitability and consumption of farmed fish.

Through a participatory approach, fisheries research institutes in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, WorldFish, the Source of the Nile fish farm in Uganda and other

commercial farms in Kenya and Tanzania, are working together to address the issues limiting the broader aquaculture sector.

With a focus on the three linked value chains for production of feed, seed and fish, these issues will be addressed through collaborative research, helping the sector to adopt more efficient, equitable, profitable and sustainable technologies, and enabling information to flow within and between the different value chains. The project will focus on the region’s two most important species: African catfish and tilapia.

The project intends to:

Improve understanding of the aquaculture value chains

Improve fish seed production through production guidelines and promotion of optimal seed sizes for farmers

Promote use of more cost-effective commercial feeds by fish farmers

Improve fish production, e.g. through development of better tank-based catfish farming technologies

Enable equitable development of regional capacity to participate in aquaculture value chains

Improve marketing through the development and promotion of value added products (e.g. smoked fish) targeted at poor consumers and trials of ICT-based market information systems

Improve environmental management of aquaculture, especially that of cages

Disseminate information on technologies and practices for all aquaculture value chains

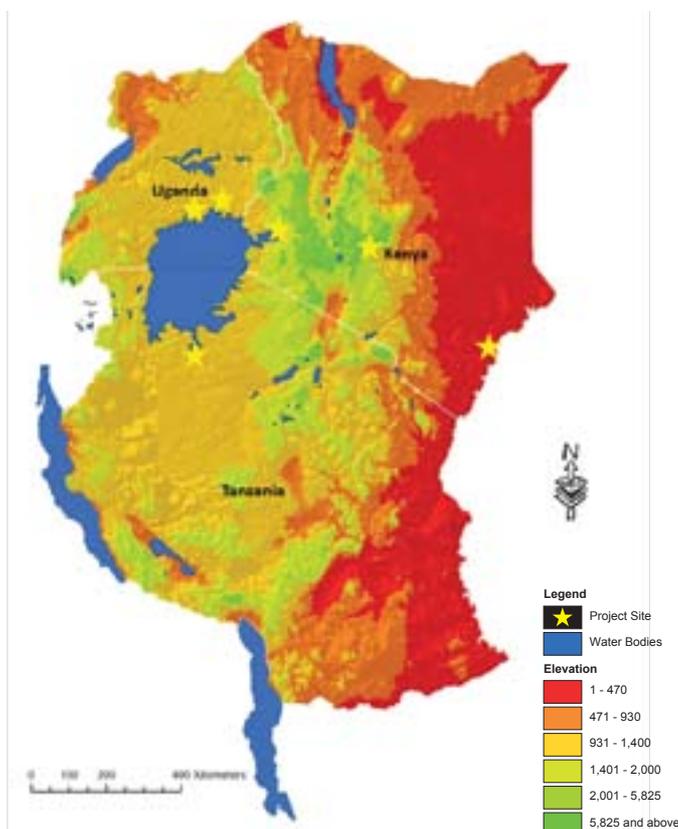
As the aquaculture sector develops in Central and Eastern Africa, to ensure that it remains sustainable in the long-term, project partners will ensure that technologies are considered not only in terms of productivity and profitability, but also for their impact on the environment.

Issues of governance

Members of the aquaculture sector in East and Central Africa have also faced barriers to production and marketing from current policies regulating the sector. To address this, following a review of the policies affecting the aquaculture sector (such as those for land tenure, access to water, and duties and taxes), recommendations will be made to improve the legal and institutional framework.

MESHING THE RESULTS

This project will help to improve the profitability and production of fish aquaculture in East and Central Africa by addressing the current barriers to development across the sector as a whole. This will be achieved through improved policy, development and adoption of more efficient practices and technologies, building the regional capacity for development and improving access to information. By looking beyond the farm, to mesh together the needs of the different value chains, the sector as a whole, and the people who rely on it for food and income, will profit.



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