

News Release

For immediate release

The advantages and disadvantages of culturing fish

Experts develop practical recommendations for decision-makers, scientists and producers for a sustainable development of Mediterranean aquaculture

Malaga , Spain, September, 2007 (IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation) - Human demand for fish is growing steadily. With fisheries decreasing worldwide, aquaculture is becoming an important socio-economic alternative and a source of proteins and healthy oils. According to FAO, aquaculture production is already reaching almost 50% of the total fish production for human consumption, including marine and freshwater species. Some even say that the future of fish production lies with aquaculture.

Aquaculture practices are quickly developing. But they raise many concerns too. The impact of aquaculture facilities and infrastructure may affect the local fauna and flora negatively, including threatened species. The effluents from aquaculture farms containing undesired chemicals (e.g. from antifouling products) and therapeutants might distress the local ecosystem. Farm escaped organisms can also have an impact. The use of exotic species in aquaculture is even more important, as they bring some risks such as the introduction of associated forms of life that come together with them (e.g. algae or microorganisms) or new pathogen agents that can spread out to a new environment. The source of food for cultivated fish, which normally consists of fish meal and fish oil, is another question to consider, as these primary products are made from small pelagic fishes whose origin might not be sustainable and even increase the already exaggerated pressure on existing fisheries.

The sustainable development of aquaculture is a major issue, and to make it sustainable, we need to see the whole picture. There are numerous options available to make it durable and environmentally safe through best management practices and appropriate siting, but others as facilities with close water systems, offshore farms or low density aquaculture are possible. Many troubles can fade away by improving the management of fish farms and aquaculture practices and by following the existing codes of conduct (e.g. Food and Agriculture Organization – Federation of European Aquaculture Producers) and good practices.

The World Conservation Union (IUCN), aware that food production and security can affect enormously nature conservation and its management, is progressing work towards the development of sustainable aquaculture. After several workshops and meetings and based on the signature of a memorandum of cooperation between the IUCN Global Marine Programme and FEAP, a project has kicked off with the publication of the first in the series of “*Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of Mediterranean Aquaculture*” by the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, thanks to the agreement signed with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Spain (MAPA).

The initial volume of these aquaculture guides focuses on the interactions between aquaculture and the environment, delivering practical recommendations regarding nine main aquaculture aspects: Domestication, Introduction of Marine Species, Capture of Wild Stocks for Aquaculture Needs, Feed Ingredients, Organic Matters in the Effluents, Pathogen Transfer, Therapeutic and other products, Antifouling Products, and the Effects on Local Flora and Fauna.

The Guidelines have been discussed and reviewed by Mediterranean experts from various countries and backgrounds (scientists, administrators and producers). The MAPA is supporting this project and work has already started with the second book to deal with site selection, involving discussions on aquaculture carrying capacity and ecosystem impact assessment but also licensing systems and decision making

processes. Aquaculture product labeling will be the main subject for the final volume to include the analysis and conclusions regarding traceability, quality and provenance labels, organic production and last but not least, certification for sustainability.

The first volume *Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of Mediterranean Aquaculture – Interactions with the Environment* is available to download from www.uicnmed.org; www.feap.info; www.mapa.es. If you need hard copies, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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THANK YOU!

Notes to editors

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About the World Conservation Union (IUCN)

Created in 1948, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) brings together 84 States, 108 government agencies, 800 plus NGOs, and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. The Union's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

The Union is the world's largest environmental knowledge network and has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. The Union is a multicultural, multilingual organization with 1,100 staff located in 62 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.

More information can be found at www.iucn.org and www.uicnmed.org