AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION PROGRAMME ADCP/REP/1986/23

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OBSERVATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO AQUACULTURE

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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global issues. Regional programmes assist both regional and national capacity building, but the long-term purpose of regional programmes and the need for self-supporting organization and management has to be resolved, especially by UNDP. Already there is evidence of duplication of effort among regional programmes (new and old), as well as among international organizations which both finance and execute projects in aquaculture.

4. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aquaculture is recognized as a growth sector increasing rapidly in importance. Assistance resources cannot sustain the proportionate investment in the sector as it expands. It is therefore imperative that the best modalities of assistance projects for aquaculture are selected and used.

Information projects continue to make the maximum use of assistance funds and benefit the largest number of individuals. Specific information has to be directed at each specific level of the sector, and it is therefore best handled by projects which have the responsibility of working at the appropriate level.

General information about aquaculture relevant to decision-making remains the greatest need for upper- and non-technical mid-level management. The sector is weak in these informed human resources, and that includes assistance agencies themselves. Notably absent are experienced individuals in policy making and planning; organization and management; financial investment and credit; legal applications; risk management; marketing organization; directing research and higher education. The need is for written and spoken material from conferences and workshops, and through experience in short-term courses. FAO and the inter-regional programmes should take responsibility for providing this general level of information, including the methodologies for planning and other fundamental activities in association at times with regional programmes.

A second highly technical level of information and experience is required by other managers. These are mid-level managers in technical fields, such as teachers, researchers, managers of service companies, farming cooperatives, etc., together with lower-level managers, such as hatchery and farm managers, owners and operators, extension leaders, etc. For the most part, large numbers of these experienced individuals exist and they have access to technical information and training from innumerable public and private sources. However, their geographic distribution is skewed, and their numbers and opportunities are greatest in developing countries and in the major aquaculture region in Asia. The need is therefore to redress the balance. In addition to more published information, the interchange of experience can be achieved through TCDC using resources in Asia and the other regions where possible, and also sending experts and volunteers from developed countries. FAO and the regional programmes should take responsibility for organizing and standardizing short-term training courses in technical topics, and the national projects for the use of experts.

Practical information, particularly brief manuals and teaching aids, continues to be needed by the producers and the consumers. National projects which have components of extension can undertake this responsibility, preferably in association with other field organizations such as the NGOs, the UNVs, and the many national volunteer services which operate effectively throughout developing countries.

Action-oriented projects in the field must continue to receive assistance, but project identification and preparation need greater consideration. Priority should be given to those national projects to which governments have a serious commitment and which demonstrate an identifiable need. Preparatory assistance is appropriate to establish these projects. Action projects must be directed towards national capacity building, and thus sector components other than biotechnical activities must be included in the spectrum of support.

Countries with an active aquaculture sector require only short-term assistance with projects which support government initiatives; for example, help to establish a marketing organization for aquaculture products, or expertise and some equipment to upgrade a field station to supply fingerlings to farmers. Countries with weak aquaculture sectors, or no sector at all, require traditional project support of technical teams with volunteers resident in-country, and long commitment.

Projects concerning production have to be considered at locations which exemplify farming conditions. Projects involving the construction of large new farms and facilities have to be treated with caution because of the high capital and operations costs. This is especially true of hatcheries, which are in great demand but may not be economic to operate. Greater use must be made of model farms and on-farm projects for realistic production.

Projects concerning research and development require long-term commitment and therefore efforts must be concentrated at a few selected centres. Facilities for good research and development work are in short supply. Although single national centres for aquaculture development may have inter-departmental difficulties for management, most countries cannot justify more than one main focal point. More use must be made of on-farm research. More cost-effective and quicker research and development results can be obtained through networking, and this should be encouraged. Where appropriate, for example, with some fundamental research priorities in fish nutrition, pathology, genetics, reproductive physiology, etc., institutions in developed countries can be included in these networks.

Umbrella projects have many organizational and management advantages if well-coordinated, and provided that each component is prepared individually. Good coordination is possible if the approach to development in each component is identical. The same is true of regional projects which have to date explored a number of approaches to aquaculture development. Umbrella and regional projects which have practised linkages and networking have had the most positive results and should be continued. Greater assistance and long-term commitments must be given to the coordination core to establish its stability and leadership. However, caution is necessary to avoid the creation of too many such projects which then have problems with duplication and overlapping responsibilities. It is also important to identify the long-term purposes of such projects. Although it may be in the interests of the funding agencies to pass management and fiscal responsibilities to the participants, it is not necessarily in the interests of the participants even though the projects are justified and useful.