

Tilapia farms in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao

By **ET Aldon**

The Philippines is one of the major producers of tilapia with most coming from Luzon (BFAR 1996). The industry is well-established in Luzon and Mindanao while its just being felt in the Visayas.

Tilapia farming in Luzon

Yap (pers. comm.) reported that in Taal Lake, a cage measuring 10 x 10 m produces 1,000-2,000 kg. Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac is producing 120 tons per year in a 1.4 ha concrete tank system. Some farms using intensive culture in earthen ponds produce 20-30 tons per ha per year.

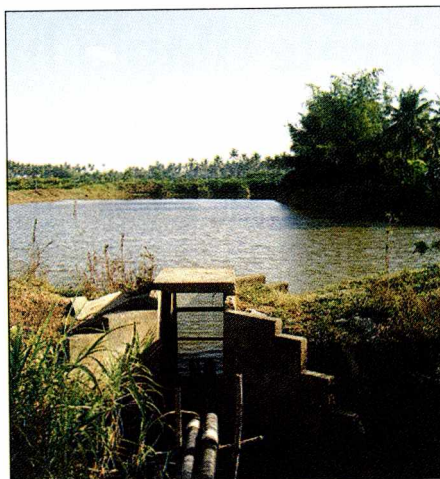
AQD's Binangonan Freshwater Station in Rizal conducts selective breeding studies for Nile tilapia strain from Thailand and the Philippine red tilapia strain. AQD has developed size-specific mass selection techniques which can give 2-3% larger fish. This mass selection procedure is now being pilot tested in two private commercial tilapia hatchery farms, hopefully to help farmers develop their own tilapia broodstock.

A farm in the Visayas

Visayas is said to be the hub of the fishery and aquaculture industry, contributing 393,973 tons to total production (BFAR 1996). With the problems of prawn diseases and milkfish fry supply, pond growers say that tilapia culture is an ideal option. There are a few successful farms (i.e., VY Domingo's in Negros Occidental and Yaptangco's in Iloilo).

Ivan Yaptangco is growing tilapia in ponds in Zarraga, Iloilo. He used to get fry from San Miguel Corporation until he put up his own hatchery in San Enrique. He now supplies other tilapia growers in Panay.

From milkfish, Yaptangco shifted to tiger shrimp in the '80s when shrimp was still very profitable. But with its slump in



The Yaptangco farm in Zarraga, Iloilo

the late '80s, he tried growing tilapia.

Pond preparation and maintenance for tilapia is much easier than shrimp and milkfish. Yaptangco uses the modular method like that of milkfish and gets good results, too. Stocking density is between 30,000 and 60,000 per ha. He gets a survival rate of 60-85%.

"We used oxytetracycline once when there was incidence of disease," Yaptangco said, "but not anymore. Instead we change water."

He lamented that the price of feeds is getting higher but the farmgate price of tilapia is still the same. "This," he said, "gives us a thin margin of profit so we settle for less costly feeds."

The feeds are supplied by either San Miguel Corp. or Tatch / Santeh Feeds Corp. To get a good price, he partially harvests after 3-4 months depending on local demand. The El Nino phenomenon also bothers him because the farm can run out of freshwater. When this happened, he transferred his broodstock from San Enrique to his farm in Zarraga.

He has one more thing to worry about: getting a license for GMT/GIFT broodstock. License to rear these breeders may be acquired from ICLARM or BFAR.

"If I can get GMT breeders and enough water, I will focus on tilapia farming," he said. "It gives me less headache."

Lake Sebu in Mindanao

Mindanao is blessed with a number of lakes. The major ones are Lakes Lanao, Buluan, and Sebu. Tilapia culture in Lake Sebu in South Cotabato started in early '70s and is now the backbone of the economy and development of the Lake Sebu municipality. The lake's 354-hectare area produces between 3 tons (Beniga 1997) and 4.3 tons (Manaay and Kinan 1997) a day, and is distributed locally.

Fish cage establishment within the lake is being regulated and maintained through the "Oplan Linis" drive launched by the local government. The project is aimed at minimizing the perennial fishkills which is hurting the industry, the worst of it happened in 1996 where 711 cages were affected. The fishkill resulted to a loss of over P17 million (Manaay and Kinan 1997).

A fishport was put up to establish a centralized marketing system and effective collection of revenues. Although the industry could produce large-sized tilapia for export in Japan, it still needs support from the government. With the cost of supplemental feeds, tilapia could hardly compete with the large volume of unfed and low-priced tilapia from nearby Lakes Buluan and Lutayan. Furthermore, the yield is still low due to poor quality fingerlings. Farmers have to extend culture periods and increase their inputs.

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