

Update on tilapia

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Consumer acceptance of tilapia continues to grow and has spread to the southern Philippines. Previously, serious farming of tilapia was limited to Luzon where it gained early acceptance as a low cost alternative to milkfish and marine pelagics such as round scads, particularly in the Metro Manila market. Now, tilapia in Metro Manila cost just as much as, or sometimes even more than, milkfish. Consumer acceptance has likewise developed in areas where tilapia used to be known only as fishpond pests. In Iloilo and Negros Occidental, tilapia is already being farmed commercially as a crop in itself rather than sporadically as a backyard or hobbyist type of operation.

PCAMRD which used to promote sex-reversed tilapia is now officially neutral as to the type of tilapia to be farmed. It has launched Project FISH (Fisheries and

aquatic resources Information Services for Human development) nationwide to encourage tilapia farming by offering 500 tilapia fingerlings free as a starter for tilapia breeding and/or culture enterprise to anyone interested. FISH is also recruiting volunteers to provide needed fisheries information to end-users and promote effective management and sustainable development of Philippine fisheries.

The ICLARM-initiated GIFT program has been spun off into a foundation outside the BFAR, CLSU or ICLARM structure. The GIFT International Foundation was conceived as a means to perpetuate the GIFT program beyond the program's lifetime. The Foundation derives its income from the sale of GIFT broodstock. Private hatcheries are accredited after receiving basic training and payment of a cash bond of P50,000.

Likewise, a foundation is also being formed to perpetuate the operations of the erstwhile ODA-supported GMIT (Genetic Manipulation for Improvement of Tilapia) Project at the Central Luzon State University Freshwater Aquaculture Center. In the interim, the super-male breeders are being produced and distributed by PhilFishGen which is the local subsidiary of the UK-

based FishGen, which has proprietary rights over the YY-technology. The super-males with their YY chromosome when mated with a normal female produces Genetically Male Tilapia (GMT) fingerlings without having to use hormones. PhilFishGen sells breeding sets to accredited hatcheries for the production of GMT fingerlings at P150 per breeding set. A breeding set consists of one super-male and three females.

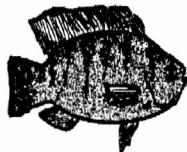
BFAR as an institution continues to develop fast growing strains in the National Freshwater Fisheries Technology Research Center in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija. Parent stock to produce quality fingerlings are being made available to accredited cooperators at nominal cost without any royalty payments.

SEAFDEC/AQD is working and field testing sound breeding practices but has not yet launched this on a nation-wide scale.

There is a strong local interest to penetrate the growing US market for tilapia fillet. The very strong domestic demand with its corresponding high local price worked against such possibility when the exchange rate for the Philippine peso was 26 to the dollar. The local market requires only 200 to 350 gram fish. This can be grown in 4 months or less and can be sold at P40 per kilogram.

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Mr. Yap co-authored the 132-page book *Winning the Future of Fisheries* with Herminio Rabanal and Jose Llobrera published by Mary Jo Educational Supply, Manila in 1997.



Want to know more about tilapia culture R&D in east Africa and southeast Asia?

THERE ARE STUDIES ON VIETNAM AND THE PHILIPPINES

The Oregon State University recently released the **15th Annual Technical Report** (1 August 1996 to 31 July 1997) of the Pond Dynamics / Aquaculture Collaborative Research Support Program.

Among others, the Report discusses:

- strain variations in sex ratio inheritance
- nutritional contribution of natural and supplemental foods for Nile tilapia: stable carbon isotope analysis
- a finishing system for large tilapia

- management to minimize the environmental impacts of pond draining
- a bioenergetics growth model for Nile tilapia *Oreochromis niloticus* based on limiting nutrients and fish standing crop in fertilized ponds
- a bioenergetics growth model for Nile tilapia on a cage-cum-pond integrated culture system
- evaluation of low cost supplemental diets for culture of Nile tilapia in North Vietnam
- development of low cost supplemental

feeds for tilapia in pond and cage culture in the Philippines

CONTACT:
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To produce tilapia fillet for the US market, a minimum size of 500 grams is required. This will generally take as long as six months to grow and can be sold wholesale locally for P50.00. It takes about three kilograms of whole fish to produce one kilogram of fillet. This means the domestic price for the 3 kilograms of whole fish to produce one kilogram of fillet is already P150. At the old exchange rate of US\$1 = P26, this was equivalent to \$5.77. Add at least one more dollar for processing, shipping, insurance and other expenses, and the whole venture becomes a losing proposition since the wholesale price for 3 to 6 oz tilapia fillet in the US is only about \$3.60 per pound. At that price, the landed cost should be at most \$3 since the US importer also has to make a profit. This is equivalent to US\$6.60 per kg as against a total cost of \$6.77.

With the peso devaluation, the dollar cost for the three kilograms of half-kilo fish goes down to US\$3.75. Thus assuming the processing cost, shipping and insurance to be one dollar per kg, this means a total cost of US\$4.75 per kg or US\$2.16 per pound. With such production cost, the fillet can be exported at US\$2.66 per pound for a margin of \$0.50 per pound fillet. This is equivalent to a margin of about P13 per kg of whole fish assuming an exchange rate of US\$1 = P37.

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Vol. 1 (1997), 258 pp. Edited by
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