

The Role of Government in Promoting Commercial Aquaculture in Africa: Examples from East Africa

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Abstract

Africa has traditionally depended on capture fisheries for most of its fish and fish products. However, with capture fisheries dwindling and human population increasing, alternative sources have become necessary. Although practiced for many decades, East African fish farming has been funded by donors whose main interest has been on subsistence fish farming targeting the very poor. Consequently, no structures were put in place to ensure growth of the sector thus preventing commercial aquaculture development. Most East African countries such as Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya have initiated programs for revamping aquaculture including policy changes. Kenya through the Economic Stimulus Program encouraged growth of the sector through helping communities construct stock and feed approximately 50,000 fish ponds. Extension services were revamped through provision of motorcycles and training to fisheries staff, farmers and hatchery managers. The multiplier effect led to over 100,000 ponds constructed in about two thirds of the country, the number of functional hatcheries rising from 21 in 2009 to over 135 in 2012. Similarly, the commercial feed manufactures producing extruded floating feeds rose from 1 to 8. This has resulted in increase of aquaculture fish production from 4000 (in 2009) to currently 19000 metric tonnes per annum. Efforts to popularize fish farming through the, eat more fish campaigns, have increased fish traders customer base. Fish production levels and productivity are likely to increase across the country. It is necessary to empower fish farmer cooperatives and develop standards for inputs enabling farmed fish to access traditional and emerging markets.