Indaqua 2009

Indaqua 2009 is a biennial event organized by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA). The event is used as a platform to present the trends in aquaculture production globally and showcase the new potential opportunities by inviting leading experts from different parts of the world to share their experience with Indian entrepreneurs. The 4th Indaqua was held Jan. 21-23, 2009 and attracted more than 300 delegates from India and overseas. The proceedings focused on the potentials for India to increase income through the export of cultured aquatic organisms. Dr. M.C. Nandeesha from the World Aquaculture Society was invited to participate in the event and as the Co-Chair of the Promotion and Membership committee of WAS, he utilized the opportunity to describe the activities and the interest of WAS in promoting responsible aquaculture.

India at present exports nearly US$ two billion worth of seafood and, based on the latest statistics, this is the eighth largest export earner for the country. Among the various commodities, shrimp constitute more than 50 percent of the total export and the contribution from aquaculture for this commodity is increasing steadily. There is an effort to diversify the species cultured and promote new species and aquaculture techniques.

The conference was inaugurated by Mr. Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Orissa on Jan. 21, 2009, in the presence of several distinguished persons including Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Honorable Minister of State for Commerce from the Government of India. Both the Chief Minister and the Commerce Minister highlighted the need to develop the aquaculture sector and create employment opportunities for youth, besides enhancing income through exports. The Government would develop programs to attract investments and wherever necessary and it was suggested to outsource the technology to hasten aquaculture technology development for different commodities.

Mr. G. Mohanakumar, Chairman, Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) has been heading the organization for the past few years and has contributed in many ways to promote costal aquaculture development in the country by exploring new options and opportunities. With professional planning, MPEDA is in the forefront of sustainable aquaculture development in the country with the establishment of a dedicated institution called the National Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture Development in Andhra Pradesh and another centre called the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture, which focuses mainly on developing technologies. Mr. Vishnu Bhat is providing support as the Director on technical side while Director K. Thomas is developing marketing strategies. The team has helped the organization stimulate export oriented aquaculture development in the country, while safeguarding the natural ecosystem by promoting the best management practices.

**Technical Sessions.**

The first keynote address for the conference was delivered by Dr. Mohammad R. Hasan, Fisheries Officer (Aquaculture) from FAO, Rome. Dr. Hasan not only reviewed global trends in major aquaculture species, but also helped with projections on various potential species as well as the input supplies for aquaculture development. In 2006, with a production of 70 t, the aquaculture sector contributed US$ 90 billion for the trade. Though Asia continues to contribute the majority of aquaculture production, the rate of growth has been better in Africa and Latin America. Within Asia, China has consistently demonstrated 11.2 percent growth for the past three decades, while the average growth for Asia was around 6 percent. Dr. Hasan also highlighted the diversity of aquaculture, which now totals over 200 species and supports the livelihoods of people besides contributing to food security and supply. He recommended that the focus of research and development should aim mainly to explore more of plant protein, oil and carbohydrate sources in aquaculture feeds.

Ms. May Noe Lwin from Thailand presented the technology developed for soft shell crab production. She indicated that the fattening technology available in Thailand in conjunction with the local breeding techniques may help the new industry.

Mr. Y.C.Thampi Samraj from the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture discussed developments on the technology for the culture of sea bass in cages. With commercial feed available, it appears that in coastal areas sea bass culture technology may become viable.

Professor Kevin Fitzsimmons from Arizona presented the global trend in tilapia production and indicated that it is the 5th most widely consumed item in USA. With the technological progress in evolving new varieties of tilapia and the development of processing technology to develop fillets and other products, it was predicted that tilapia will continue to dominate the aquaculture sector in the coming years. Since
there is lot of interest in India in tilapia culture, with the official permission granted by the Government of India, some of the companies are set to enter into tilapia production.

The second technical session included a presentation by Dr. Matthew Briggs on the culture of *P. vannamei* and its suitability for India. Since India has officially permitted the introduction of *P. Vannamei*, issues related to its susceptibility for disease and the spread of new viruses were also discussed. While there is considerable controversy on the introduction and promotion of the species and its culture at the cost of tiger shrimp, the need to exercise care in the culture of this species in biosecure environments was highlighted.

Success in producing organic giant freshwater shrimp was presented by Mr. Simon John, Joint Director of MPEDA. The technical partnership between MPEDA and SIPPO (Swiss Import Promotion Programme) has enabled the development of technology and certification by Naturland of Germany to meet European market requirements.

Mr. N. R. Umesh from the National Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture Development discussed the revival of shrimp farming through evolving better management practices (BMP). The spectacular success achieved in organizing a large number of farmer groups and helping them follow good aquaculture practices that help eliminate disease risks is a technology evolved by MPEDA-NACA partnership. Today, the BMP are used in many parts of the world and are proving to be good tools to ensure sustainable farming practices.

Dr. Neil Svennevig from Denmark presented the potentials available at present for the offshore farming in India and emphasized the need for using species that can be cultured in periods of 6-8 months. Because of the geographical location and environment, only some areas are suitable and such sites can be chosen for developing the technology.

The session chaired by Mr. Vishnu Bhat with Dr. M.C. Nandeesh from WAS serving as the panelist highlighted the scope for organic aquaculture as well as hasten costal aquaculture development through BMP. In order to promote BMP in a big way, the need to create well trained practitioners was emphasized.

In the last session, Dr. Sena DeSilva, Director General of NACA presented the keynote address on new challenges confronting Asian aquaculture. He remarked on how small scale aquaculture is the backbone to Asian aquaculture and the way that type of aquaculture is helping the poor by providing food and economic security. The examples of how catfish culture and the culture of rohu in Vietnam are helping the country earn foreign exchange through exports and creating of employment was also highlighted. He also pointed at the need to give highest importance to food quality standards, traceability and certification, in view of changing market trends. The effort of NACA to evolve regionally acceptable certification standards involving all member Governments was presented. Asian farmers, being small scale in nature, need to be organized into groups to help them derive best benefits from the purchase of inputs to marketing their products. As product quality is the key factor, such organizations of farmers into groups helps in meeting the international standards for the products produced.

Dr. R. Paul Raj, Secretary to the Coastal Aquaculture Authority of India presented the new guidelines evolved by the agency that have been set up as per the directions of the supreme court of India. The registration of all farms involved in costal aquaculture is now mandatory and the farms have to follow established norms to prevent pollution and promote sustainable farming practices.

Ms. Shirlene Maria from INFOFISH presented the market trends for various sea foods and highlighted the growing market for tilapia globally. Also, value added products are gaining popularity with the changing economies and life styles of the people in many areas.

The symposium concluded with a presentation by Prof. Shankar on biosecurity in aquaculture. As culture systems are being intensified, the need for promoting bio-secure culture practices to safeguard the environment and prevent the spread of diseases were highlighted.

The session was Co-Chaired by Dr. Vasudevappa from the National Fisheries Development Corporation and Mr. K. Thomas, Director of Marketing with Mr. D. Ramraj serving as the panelist. It was pointed out that Indian aquaculture should focus on developing better management practices wherever available. Certification being a key issue, it was suggested by the panel to focus on that aspect and develop procedures that can help small farmers.

— Dr. M.C.Nandeesh

World Aquaculture Society