

Rethinking aquaculture

In a statement to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development several NGOs urged for responsible aquaculture development

In recent years, aquaculture development has been repeatedly promoted as a solution to meet growing world food needs from fish. Traditional forms of aquaculture can, and have, made substantial contributions to food supplies in areas of the world where food needs are most acute.

However, recent patterns of aquaculture development have emphasized the production of high-value species for export markets. In particular, the rapid development and expansion of intensive aquaculture for shrimp has resulted in widespread degradation of the environment, displacement of coastal fishing and farming communities, and a negative impact on local food supplies and food security.

The FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, under Article 9, urges responsible aquaculture development. National and regional implementation of the FAO Code, the Convention on Biological Diversity and other existing laws and policies, must be pursued in a manner which ensures that unsustainable aquaculture is prohibited, before there is more irreversible damage, loss of biodiversity, or harm to coastal communities.

The undersigned Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) urge governments to:

- ensure that artisanal fisheries and dependent coastal communities, as well as their access to community resources, are not adversely affected by aquaculture development or operations, including extensive, semi-intensive and intensive aquaculture methods;
- ensure the use of environmental and social impact assessments prior to aquaculture development, and regular, continuous monitoring of the environmental and social impacts of aquaculture operations;
- ensure the protection of mangrove forests, wetlands and other ecologically sensitive coastal areas;
- prohibit the use of toxic and bio-accumulative compounds in aquaculture operations;
- apply the precautionary approach to aquaculture development;
- prohibit the pollution of surrounding areas resulting from the excessive discharge of organic wastes;
- prohibit the development and use of genetically modified organisms;
- prohibit the use of exotic or alien species;
- prohibit the use or salinization of freshwater supplies, including groundwater, important for drinking or agriculture;
- prohibit the use in aquaculture operations of feeds consisting of fish that is, or could be, used as food for people;
- prohibit the wholesale conversion of agricultural or cultivable land to aquaculture use;
- ensure that abandoned or degraded aquaculture sites are

ecologically rehabilitated and that the companies or industry responsible bear the *cost* of rehabilitation;

- ensure that the collection of larvae does not adversely affect species biodiversity;
- ensure that aquaculture and other coastal developments are addressed in integrated coastal management planning, which should include the meaningful participation of all coastal user groups;
- ensure the development of aquaculture in a manner which is compatible with the social, cultural and economic interests of coastal communities, as well as ensure that such developments are sustainable, socially equitable and ecologically sound; and,
- ensure that multilateral development banks, bilateral aid agencies, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and other relevant national and international organizations or institutions do not fund or otherwise promote aquaculture development inconsistent with the above criteria. 3

This statement has been endorsed by the following NGOs:

- Accion Ecologica (Ecuador)
- Christian Aid (UK)
- Coalition of Environmental NGOs in Bangladesh
- Consumers Association of Penang (Malaysia)
- CODDEFFAGOLF (Honduras)
- Desarrollo Ambiente y Sociedad (Mexico)
- Earth Island Institute (USA)
- Environmental Defense Fund (USA)
- Greenpeace International
- Indigenous and Community Rights Advocacy Forum (Papua New Guinea)
- International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
- International Network Against Unsustainable Aquaculture
- Mangrove Action Project
- Movimento Nacional de Pescadores Riberenos (Mexico)
- Nijero Kori (Bangladesh)
- Ocean Advocates (USA)
- Orissa Krushak Mahasangh (India)
- People's Action Against Shrimp Industry (India)
- PREPARE (India)
- Sahabat Alam Malaysia
- Sierra Club Canada
- Sea Turtle Restoration Project (USA)
- Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
- Third World Network

Review

This statement was presented on behalf of the above mentioned NGOs by Sebastian Mathew of ICSF at the UN on 1 May 1996