

UPTAKE OF RNRRS OUTPUTS FACILITATED BY RIU-NIGERIA

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RNRRS OUTPUT AFGPO3: INTEGRATED FISH AND VEGETABLE FARMING

RIU-Nigeria Programme facilitated the hosting of the first Zonal Aquaculture Training in Idah Kogi State on 22 October 2009. The training objectives included building the capacity of fish farmers on the right management techniques to adopt for optimum aquaculture production, link farmers to reputable sources of fingerlings and other service providers, peer learning event and introduce the technology of integrating fish and vegetable farming. This integrated approach has enormous potential economic, environmental and social benefits which include income maximization, efficient utilization of otherwise discarded waste water, efficient use of land, and self-employment. The approach will also potentially increase the local supply of vegetables to rural households and to nearby urban centers. Considering the fact that the Aquaculture Platform is situated in the land locked (North Central States) area of the country where mega populations are found and inadequate water supply and malnutrition exist, this technology could lead to major impact on improving incomes, food and nutrition.

The workshop held at a hall on the campus of the Federal Polytechnic Idah. Participants at the workshop were made up of fish farmers, vegetable farmers, aquaculture service providers, fish breeders, fish marketers, representatives of the Federal Department of Fisheries and Kogi State Department of Fisheries.

During the workshop small and medium-scale fish farmers were taught best practices related to pond preparation for stocking, acquiring the right fingerlings, proper stocking density, water quality management, feeds and feeding, and record keeping amongst others, all necessary for achieving cost-effectiveness and economic efficiency in a fish farming enterprise. This training was part of a skills development initiative to enable the fish farmers improve their production efficiency, reduce production costs, improve fish performance (growth rate and feed efficiency) and their business incomes, and grow their livelihoods.

The workshop also addressed the prospects and opportunities that exist in integrating fish farming with vegetable farming. Varieties of vegetables seeds were available at the workshop courtesy of agricultural service providers. A case study of an aquaculture-horticulture practitioner showed very significant increases in from the sale of bananas, papayas and oranges planted around the small fish pond and watered with waste water from the fish ponds. The yield from these garden during the dry season was significantly higher than from rain-fed gardens of equivalent size in the locality Sixty five (65) participants at the workshop obtained seeds of varieties of vegetables, including tomatoes, spinach, *atarugu* peppers, tatasi peppers, carrots, cucumbers and cabbage for adoption.

Peer learning activities at the training involved group visits to three fish farms operating different management systems – At the first farm, the ponds were constructed of wooden crates with tarpaulin inner lining; the second farm had earthen ponds by a *fadama* (swampy area) with Tilapia and Clarias, while the third had concrete ponds – were visited by participants. At these farms, the strengths, weaknesses and management issues relating to the each of these farming systems were identified and discussed by the visiting group. Various other general practices, challenges and business issues related to fish farming were discussed.

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