

## FOOD SAFETY AND AQUATIC ANIMALS

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While fish supply from wild capture fisheries has stagnated over the years, the demand for fish and fish products continues to rise. Consumption has more than doubled since 1973. This increasing demand has been steadily met by a robust increase in aquaculture production, estimated at an average 8.3% yearly growth during the period 1970 – 2008. This trend is projected to continue, with the contribution of aquaculture to fish food supply estimated to reach 60 % by 2020, if not before.

Likewise, fish and seafood are the most traded food commodity. Around 32 to 40 % of fish globally harvested entered international trade over the last 40 years, increasing in value from a mere US\$8 billion in 1976 to an estimated export value of US\$102 billion in 2008. Aquaculture production contributes significantly to this fish trade. Developing countries contribute almost 50 % in value of world fish exports. On the other hand, three main import markets: the European Union, Japan and the United States of America, represented a total of 70% of the import value in 2008. These markets dominate international fish trade in terms of prices as well as market access requirements, especially fish safety and quality requirements.

Consumer protection has been and will remain a major concern for many countries. The recurring food and feed scares of last decades (bovine spongiform encephalopathy BSE, dioxins, avian flu, SARS, melamine) exacerbate this concern and frequently make headlines in the media. Likewise, the increased globalization of fish trade has highlighted the risk of cross-border transmission of hazardous agents and the rapid development of aquaculture has been accompanied by the emergence of food safety concerns such as microbial food infections and residues of veterinary drugs.

Many countries responded by the enactment of a range of public regulatory frameworks for food safety and quality and for the protection of the environment from negative impacts of aquaculture. Official standards published by the OIE and the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission are the technical references for health and safety measures affecting international trade that are adopted by Members of the World Trade Organization. In addition, a range of related standards have been introduced by the private sector (processors, retailers) or NGOs.

This presentation will review safety and quality issues related to aquaculture production and the appropriate systems to manage these risks, as well as highlighting the need for well-designed practices to manage aquatic animal health and provide the basis for the application of Good Aquaculture Practices and HACCP in aquaculture.

Keywords: Good Aquaculture Practices – OIE standards – Codex standards – public regulatory frameworks – food safety

