

PANAMANIAN AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE

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The Republic of Panama is located in Central America, has the advantage of having coasts in the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, which offers privileged access to the enormous wealth offered by these two seas.

The most important aquaculture product exported from Panama is shrimp, from both wild and culture fisheries.

The volume of production allows for significant export to international markets, the main importing countries being the United States of America, Europe and Japan.

The Panamanian fishing industry includes three modes: industrial, artisanal and aquaculture.

It is noteworthy that the aquaculture industry provides great benefits to the country, as the value of production is more than 70 million dollars a year, generating about 40 thousand jobs and making a significant direct and indirect contribution to reducing the rate of unemployment and increasing the quality of life of those involved.

Application of the OIE standards for aquatic animal health, monitoring and disease reporting is important to maintain the confidence of trading partners in the health and quality of Panamanian aquaculture products.

In Panama the competent authorities for aquatic health and aquaculture are found in several public sector institutions, principally:

- Ministry of Agricultural Development, National Directorate of Animal Health (MIDA/ DINASA)
- Ministry of Health (MINSA)
- Panamanian Food Safety Authority (AUPSA)
- Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (ARAP)

Within the Department of Epidemiology, in DINASA, the National Aquatic Animal Health Programme is responsible for surveillance, control and monitoring of aquatic organisms and their diseases in the country and drawing up the parameters to establish import requirements, as well as control and checks on the use and mobilization of wild stocks.

Health mechanisms adopted to prevent and control diseases of aquatic organisms in Panama

- Selection of animals for reproduction with checking by PCR
- Control over host animals and their movement
- Disease control and monitoring in farms, with involvement of laboratories
- Inspection, training and disease simulation exercises.

Notably, in 2007, Panama was the first country to perform simulation for diseases with economic impact on the cultivation of marine shrimp.

Prospects for Panama

Panama has the potential to increase shrimp exports to a figure of \$ 180 million annually, to promote and encourage export of tilapia, trout and cobia for their high quality, and to open new export markets. This depends on maintaining the aquatic animal health status and improving surveillance and control to prevent the entry of diseases that may affect the health of shrimp and other aquatic production systems. Maintaining approval for export markets by strengthening implementation of the OIE standards for aquatic disease control and reporting is important to ensure maintenance and expansion of export markets for the future.

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