DOMESTIC FISHERY

Egypt is located in Northeast Africa and has a coastline on the Mediterranean Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Nile River. Egypt has approximately 2,420 kilometres of coastline, with 53,600 square kilometres of shelf area to 200 metres in depth. In addition, Egypt's estimated EEZ area is equal to 50,600 square kilometres with inland waters totalling 8,560 square kilometres. The FAO estimates Egypt has a marine fishery potential of approximately 45,000 metric tonnes, and an inland fishery potential of 215,000 metric tonnes, which gives Egypt a total potential fishery resource of 260,000 metric tonnes.

AQUACULTURE

Aquaculture has supplemented traditional agriculture in Egypt for centuries by adding an important source of protein to the Egyptian diet. Egypt is blessed with a climate suitable for fish culture and abundant water resources that could potentially be utilised for aquaculture. Increases in imports of fishery products in the early 1980's led the Egyptian government to set out to develop further the aquaculture sector. The following are the objectives of aquaculture development in Egypt: 1)to increase the production and consumption of fish as an alternative source of protein; 2) to increase food self-sufficiency and reduce the quantum of food imports as well as to enhance utilisation of water resources; 3) to provide rural employment; 4) to exploit the large areas of saline lands not suitable for agriculture; 5) to restock the lakes where overfishing has exhausted the natural stock; and, 6) to eliminate unwanted aquatic weeds from ponds and irrigation canals through rearing of fish such as grass carp which primarily feed on weeds.

Aquaculture in Egypt varies between the traditional "*howsha*" enclosure methods and the modern advanced fish farm operations. INFOFISH cites official Egyptian sources which report the Government operated fish farms in Al Zawiya (1,000 feddans), Al Rabua (1,000 feddans), Barsik (1,000 feddans), Al Manzala (1,000 feddans), Al Abassa (1,200 feddans), Damyaitta (2,000 feddans), Kafr El Sheikh (600 feddans), and a couple of farms in Port Faud and Alexandria. In addition, public fish farms leased out by the Government totalled approximately 60,000 feddans (1 feddan=1.04 acres). The Government reports that the Barsik aquaculture project recovered its investment within three seasons, and the Airport farm in Alexandria reported an increase in production of 500 percent, rising from 50 tonnes per year to 250 tonnes per year.

INFOFISH reports that the most commonly cultured species in aquaculture in Egypt are fresh and brackishwater finfish. Tilapia (St. Peter's fish) species (O niloticus, S galilaeus, T zilli and O aureus) are the most popular and are reared in polyculture with mullets (Mugil cephalus and M capito) and carps. Currently, catfish (Clarias lazera), Nile perch (Lates niloticus) and eel (Anguilla) are being reared in the system. Carps are among the exotic species successfully introduced into the country. The common carp (Cyprinus carpio) was brought in from Indonesia in the early 1930's. Subsequently, the mirror carp (Cyprinus carpio v specularis) imported from France, the silver carp (Hypophthalmichthys molitrix) from Japan, and the grass carp (Ctenopharyngodon idella) from Hong Kong have been successfully cultured. The black bass and O mossambicus were also imported, though this was later discontinued. The most popular brackishwater and marine fish are mullet, eel and sole. Sea bream (Sparus amatus), seabass (Dicentrarchus labrak) and shrimp (Penaeus sp) are also showing good results in culture and gaining recognition. Lately, T zilli, a tilapia variety that proved tolerant to saline conditions, has also been adopted by brackishwater fish farmers.