

Growing interest in developing Aquaculture in the Caprivi Region as wild fish stocks dwindle.

Many people are interested in developing aquaculture in the Caprivi region as demonstrated by the high turnout at the recently held National Training Course on Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture in Katima Mulilo.

The course was offered by INFOSA (The Inter-governmental Organisation for Marketing Information and Technical Advisory Services for the Fisheries Industry in Southern Africa) in collaboration with Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, to 47 participants from different districts of the Caprivi region.

Aquaculture in most countries in Southern Africa is a relatively new but rapidly growing industry. Governments in the region are prioritizing the development of this sector having realized the dwindling nature of capture fisheries and also seen the potential benefits that aquaculture holds in terms of upliftment of rural livelihoods through employment creation, poverty alleviation, food security, development of rural SMEs and other associated benefits. Unlike agriculture, aquaculture is a new sector to many, with limited tertiary institutions offering direct studies. To fill this gap, INFOSA is conducting short term, level based courses on freshwater aquaculture in the region, targeting those interested from grass roots community members, fish farm project workers, enthusiastic “would-be” fish farmers, extension workers and technicians. The courses are mostly held in collaboration with responsible government institutions.

The course in the Caprivi Region, entitled *“Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Techniques and Extension Methodologies”* aimed at imparting knowledge and improving skills on inland fisheries and aquaculture production was customized to suit conditions in Caprivi region. A representative from the Governor’s office Mr. Robert Mapenzi was the guest of honor and officially opened the training course. A number of guest presenters and resource persons including several officials from the Directorate of Aquaculture in the Caprivi and Kavango Region, aquaculture experts from INFOSA, China and inland fisheries experts from the on-going WWF-NNF project (Integrated Management of the Zambezi / Chobe River System Transboundary Fishery Resource), gave lectures in their various fields of expertise. Most of the participants had strong aspirations in starting small scale aquaculture projects integrated with an existing agricultural activity on suitable sites and under suitable conditions. Some participants were co-operative members working at the two government pilot fish farming projects in the region (Kalimbeza and Likunganelo).

The participants were taught all practices of aquaculture relevant to their region, from the actual fish rearing process (the farming techniques) to harvest, including some post harvest activities such as fish processing techniques and fish marketing strategies. Furthermore, the participants were taught how to manage fish farms daily as a business and their role as community members in managing

inland fisheries resources. The course was delivered in a mix of ways ranging from slide shows, videos, pictures, case study discussions etc. At the end of each training day, participants would attend some practical lessons where various farming practices and techniques were demonstrated at the nearby Likunganelo Fish Farm.

Aquaculture can be carried out in different ways as long as one has the prime requirements namely water, land, capital, access to fish seed (fingerlings) and access to fish feed. The Caprivi region has abundant water supplies and sufficient land, however, due to occasional flooding of the Eastern Caprivi region, one has to ensure that fish farms are sited correctly to avoid environmental risks.

Although there have been major setbacks in the development of freshwater aquaculture in Caprivi due to flooding risks, EUS fish disease outbreak, shortages of start-up capital etc, many people are still considering setting up small scale aquaculture projects for food security, employment and additional income. The government is planning on setting up a hatchery in the area for the supply of fish seed to those interested in aquaculture projects and for the restocking of inland water bodies in the area. Government will also assist those working on the pilot fish farms through training and extension services.

Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources is promoting the development of aquaculture throughout the country wherever natural conditions allow. A number of freshwater aquaculture projects are in operation or are currently being set in various regions.

This INFOSA sponsored course follows previous successful ones offered at Hardap Inland Aquaculture Centre Hardap Region (June 2009) and Kamutjonga Inland Fisheries Institute (KIFI) in Kavango Region (October 2008), including a few others in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Plans are underway to conduct similar courses in the North-West regions of Namibia.