

ECO-FRIENDLY RURAL AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT IN SRI LANKA

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In 1995, the Small Fishers Federation engaged in a major programme for development of the aquaculture industry in Sri Lanka, launched by the country's Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (Aquaculture Development Division). After the selection of an unutilised land at Keliyawalana in Bandagiriya as a suitable site for commencing a community based aquaculture programme, the local Community Centre was equipped for conducting meetings, training programs and evaluation activities. Following the construction of ponds in 1997, about 1000 fingerlings of Red Tilapia, Common Carp and Nile Tilapia were stocked in 4 mud ponds. Thereafter, action was taken to raise a brood stock of fish and fry obtained from the ponds were raised to fingerlings. In addition to the 3403m² of ponds, 4 cement tanks with a total capacity of 27m² were constructed for breeding of Common Carp. Action has been taken for ornamental fish culture, integrated fish farming with poultry and for the establishment of an aquaculture exhibition centre.

Bandagiriya Rural Aquaculture Development Centre provides excellent benefits to the rural farmers by improving and expanding their knowledge and endeavour to learn more about rural aquaculture, through its many youth and women training programmes focussing on rural aquaculture development. The Centre targets each year to produce a minimum of 1 million fish fry and fingerlings. So far it has produced more than 700000 fish fingerlings. The Centre has established a revolving fund with the seed money of 600 000 Sri Lanka Rupees (1 USD ≈ 60 Rs) to cater to the credit requirement of the rural folk, particularly the women and youngsters to start self-employment, based on rural aquaculture. A special feature of the rural aquaculture development programme of the Federation is the establishment of an effective linkage with governmental organisations such as the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, Divisional Secretariats and Integrated Rural Development Programmes, of which the officers' advice and guidance is used to successfully implement the project. Technical assistance and extension facilities for the rural aquaculture development programme of the Centre for instance are provided by the National Aquaculture Development Authority of Sri Lanka (NAQDA) of the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development through its fish breeding centre at Udawalawe. In addition to the government, the private sector ornamental fish exporters also support the Centre to implement a viable marketing programme for rural fisher folk at Bandagiriya.

Contrasting with the intense activities from medium and large scale aquaculture companies in Sri Lanka, this site has thus become a model for a small scale community based aquaculture programme, and the first community based project under the Small Fishers Federation for transferring fish seed production technology to the farmers.