Government intervention in aquaculture development in Kenya

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Although aquaculture has been practiced for many decades in Kenya, fish farming has only recently become a serious alternative to capture fisheries. Before government intervention, aquaculture was mainly small scale. Since no structures for commercial aquaculture production were put in place, aquaculture was targeted at the poorest segment of rural farmers and was mainly at subsistence levels. Recently, the Government of Kenya initiated programs for revamping aquaculture development including changes in policy formulation, and increased research focus as well as direct investment. Through the Economic Stimulus Program funded Fish Farming Enterprise Productivity Program (ESP-FFEPP), Kenya encouraged the growth of the sector by helping communities construct, stock and feed approximately 50,000 fishponds across the country. Extension services were revamped through provision of motorcycles and training to fisheries staff, farmers and hatchery managers. Research was carried to produce fast growing seed and the capacity of broodstock in the country increased to over 200,000 brooders. The multiplier effect led to over 100,000 fishponds in about two thirds of the country, the number of functional hatcheries rising from 21 in 2009 to over 150 in 2014. Similarly, the commercial feed manufactures producing extruded floating fish feeds rose from 1 to 8 and 6 cottage feed producers in 2014. This has resulted in increase of aquaculture fish production from 4,000 metric tonnes (in 2009) to 48,000MT per annum currently. The government also spearheaded efforts to popularize fish farming through awareness campaigns and product value addition and diversification. Similarly, the government has now embarked on fish quality assurance efforts and standards setting for inputs and production processes to ensure aquaculture fish and fish products continue to access traditional and emerging markets.

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