

An overview of the current status of Kenyan fish feed industry and feed management practices, challenges and opportunities

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The profitability of commercial fish farming operation is of paramount importance to all farmers. However, farmers must have access to well-balanced and cost effective feeds coupled with optimal on-farm feed management practices as a prerequisite to profitable production. This paper presents an audit of the current status of the Kenyan fish feed industry and on-farm feed management practices including opportunities and constraints from the fish farmer's perspective. The Kenyan fish feed industry has been boosted with the development of fish feed standards, which is expected to ensure quality fish feeds for all farmers. Much of the aquafeeds used in Kenya are either produced on-farm or by small-scale semi-commercial feed manufacturers, and improvements to the quality and preparation of these feeds are likely to bring about improved productivity and cost savings. Since feed management practices significantly impact the economic performance of production systems, adopting appropriate feed management strategies is instrumental to maximize returns. In a few instances, innovative farmers have reported developing their own feeding strategies such as spreading feeds at fixed points at the same time daily, bag and restrictive feeding techniques, break feeding schedules and promoting natural pond productivity. Provision of species-specific feeds addressing the nutritional requirements of the different life stages of fish is still an issue. Other challenges include inadequate access to finance, a lack of technical innovations, absence of feed formulation and processing knowledge and poor feed handling and storage techniques. The potential to develop public private partnerships with farmer groups to improve access to information should be considered. Programs that use the local media to provide farmers with extension messages must be encouraged. The government should frequently carry out spot checks on feeds supplied to Agrovets to ascertain its quality. Fish farmers should also be trained on feed formulation, transportation and storage to maintain a constant feed supply and save on costs.

Keywords:

Kenya, fish feeds, management, challenges, opportunities.