



**FAO/DOF Thailand/NACA Expert Workshop on  
Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification  
27-30 March 2007. Bangkok, Thailand**

**Background:**

Driven by concerns over food safety, and environmental and social sustainability of aquaculture production, over the years there have been attempts to respond to the consequent public perceptions and market requirements. Food safety standards have been elevated and international trade regulations tightened. Policy and regulations governing environmental sustainability have been put in place in many countries, requiring aquaculture producers to comply with more stringent environmental mitigation and protection measures. In some countries these changes were initiated by the aquaculture sector itself, usually within the more organized private industry sector to ensure its sustainability and protect operations from poorly managed activities. The private sector has made significant advances in the management of its activities and there are many examples of improved management of farming systems that have reduced environmental impacts and improved efficiency, including profitability, in all regions.

Owing to the need for responding to these environmental and consumer concerns on aquaculture production and in order to secure better market access, there is increasing interest in certification of aquaculture production systems, practices, processes and products from aquaculture. Many markets increasingly recognize that some form of certification is a way of assuring buyers, retailers, and consumers that fishery products are safe to consume and originate from aquaculture farms or capture fisheries adopting responsible management practices. Certification has been introduced to capture fisheries for some time and guidelines for eco-labelling of capture fishery products were developed by FAO in 2005<sup>1</sup> and efforts are being made to develop eco-labelling guidelines for inland fisheries<sup>2</sup>.

In several countries, aquaculture producers are introducing environmental certification of aquaculture products, either individually or in a coordinated manner, in order to credibly demonstrate that their production practices are non-polluting, non-disease transmitting and/or non-ecologically threatening<sup>3,4</sup>. Some countries are attempting to introduce state-mediated certification procedures to certify that aquaculture products are safe to consume and farmed in accordance with certain environmental standards<sup>5</sup>. Most of the work done on improved management has been on salmon and shrimp, mainly due to their high commodity value and the importance attached as the most internationally traded products.

Within the context of the application of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), the FAO Committee on Fisheries Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI/SCA) requested FAO to

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<sup>1</sup> FAO. Guidelines for Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries. Rome., FAO. 2005. 90p.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Expert Consultation on Guidelines on Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Inland Fisheries Rome, Italy. 23 May 2006 - 26 May 2006

<sup>3</sup> ABCC. 2004. "Código de conduta para desenvolvimento sustentável e responsável da carcinicultura brasileira". ABCC - Association of shrimp growers of Brazil.

<sup>4</sup> The state of world aquaculture 2006. FAO Fisheries Technical Paper. No. 500. Rome, FAO. 2006.

<sup>5</sup> FAO: TCP/CHI/3002 Certification of the compliance of the environmental regulations by the aquaculture industry in Chile.

organise Expert Workshops to make recommendations regarding the development of harmonised shrimp farming standards and review certification procedures for global acceptance and transparency, which will also assist in elaborating norms and reviewing the diverse options and relative benefits of these approaches. In this regard, the Sub-Committee encouraged FAO to play a lead role in facilitating the development of guidelines which could be considered when national and regional aquaculture standards are developed. Several members of the Sub-Committee as well as a number of inter-governmental organizations offered to cooperate at national, regional and international level, and requested FAO to provide a platform for such collaboration. The Sub-Committee also requested setting up of an expert group on reviewing certification of shrimp farming systems.

An Expert Workshop on “*Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification*”, as recommended by the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture will be held in Bangkok from 27-30 March 2007. The Bangkok Expert Workshop will be hosted by the Government of Thailand. It will be conducted as a joint FAO/DOF-Thailand/NACA Expert Workshop.

The workshop is the first in a series of workshops/consultations as needed to prepare the international guidelines for the certification of aquaculture products. This initial workshop, being hosted in Asia, will have a strong emphasis on aquaculture products from Asian aquaculture producers. Further workshops are planned for Brazil during July 2007, and possibly elsewhere with the intention of bringing together global consensus on the guidelines and to address other issues and needs around aquaculture certification. Further background is provided in a separate Concept Note available at [www.enaca.org/certification](http://www.enaca.org/certification).

### **Objectives:**

The purpose of the workshop is to bring stakeholders together to initiate a process for development of guidelines for certification of aquaculture as requested by the COFI/SCA. It will assist in scoping the content of the certification guidelines and laying the groundwork for the programme of work on aquaculture certification. In addition, the workshop will look at the issues specific to the Asia regional issues of certification. This will complement the regional analysis for Latin America to be done during the planned workshop in Brazil in July 2007.

### **Expected Outputs:**

The expected outputs from the workshop, driven by the discussions and perspectives of the participants, are as follows:

- 1) Stakeholders brought together to initiate process of development of guidelines on certification of aquaculture products.
- 2) Aquaculture certification status and potential clarified and key issues and constraints identified.
- 3) Consensus built on the scope of guidelines for certification.
- 4) Initial work on contents of guidelines conducted.
- 5) Agreement reached on a further process of working together among stakeholders to develop/complete the guidelines

### **Participants:**

Participation of a wide range of experts and experiences from all round the world is envisaged.

### **Workshop Organisation:**

The workshop will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, involving 30-40 invited participants with different experiences and perspectives on certification of aquaculture products. The workshop discussions will be informed by some initial review papers prepared by FAO, NACA and a selected number of papers/presentations from participants. All participants are invited to bring documentation and other materials describing certification programs and experiences in aquaculture certification. The major part of the workshop however will be spent on discussions and working together, rather than presentations.