Strategies to sustain growth in India

H₂S toxicity – the silent killer

Shrimp nursery technology

Tilapia in China and India

Show preview at APA 2016
ASC certification lifts China’s tilapia farms to greater heights of responsible farming and enhances their reach to the discerning European markets.

Increased consumer demand in Europe and China for certified tilapia products has been the catalyst for a major transformation of the aquaculture industry in China. With one-fifth of the world’s population, China accounts for two-thirds of the world’s reported aquaculture production. In 2012, global production of farmed tilapia reached three million tonnes a year, with 40% produced by China alone.

Figures for this period also show that the European Union (EU) imported approximately 10% of the tilapia exported from China every year, making them the third largest importer of Chinese tilapia in the world, after the United States and Middle East. The demand is driven by European consumers buying the species, however this same customer base shows a strong preference for sustainably produced products.

These two factors have led to an increased interest in Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) certification in China. The first Chinese farms to undergo rigorous assessment against the ASC standard achieved certification in 2015. The current ASC output of Chinese tilapia is 1,841 tonnes, all derived from Qionghai Zhongpingzi Grobest, Chengmai Xingyuan Development Co Ltd, and Wenchang Zhou Qinfu. These three farms reflect the pioneering initiative and efforts of responsible operators to meet the major challenges facing the industry in China. Each of the farms is in the southern provinces — the region which includes Hainan, Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian, and accounts for nearly 90% of China’s total tilapia production — and all gained ASC certification late last year.

ASC certification gives retail partners and consumers confidence that farms are operating according to the best standard for environmental and social responsibility. It can also decrease barriers to desirable markets and allow certified farms to reach consumers interested in purchasing only responsibly produced seafood.

The increase in certification bodes well for the industry across China and the success of the three is inspiring more farms to follow their lead. Throughout Asia, the ASC currently has scores of farms in assessment in China, Taiwan and Vietnam. In terms of output in the region, Indonesia leads with a total certified production volume of 40,710 tonnes of ASC certified seafood, followed by Vietnam with 12,000 tonnes and Malaysia with 3,630 tonnes.

The journey to responsible aquaculture

In 2012, when the first ASC certified farmed fish products entered the world’s seafood markets, China faced some major challenges in tilapia aquaculture production. Issues including a lack of transparency and traceability in the supply chain, poor environmental and social practices, and weakness in the production system in some Chinese tilapia farms, led to unsustainable practices which diminished consumer confidence in the industry.

The situation inspired the World Wildlife Federation (WWF) China to kick-start a transformative change in China’s enormous tilapia aquaculture sector in order to achieve higher efficiency and measurable environmental sustainability goals. Together with the ASC, they formed a partnership with the China Aquatic Products Processing and Marketing Alliance (CAPPMA) to create a joint project called Greening the Supply of Chinese Tilapia.

This two-year long project engaged tilapia aquaculture enterprises in China to improve transparency within the industry, raise awareness among consumers and inform the government of China about responsible fish-farming policies. The project also introduced ASC standards to China. Thus, the program paved the way for farms to achieve certification against a standard that rewards and recognises environmentally and socially responsible production and brings with it the potential to reach new markets.

How certification works

To retain its independence, ASC does not assess fish farms itself; instead relying on third party certifiers to audit farms against the ASC standards and assess whether they are operating responsibly. Certificates are issued by the independently accredited certifying agency.

Assessing a fish farm’s operating systems and their environmental and social impacts is complex. But the basic concept is simple — farms must have in place the most effective systems that ensure minimal negative environmental and social impact. Every ASC certified fish farm has demonstrated that it is well managed and minimises any adverse impacts.

As a result ASC certified farms deliver a cleaner seabed, cleaner water and healthier fish. They can also demonstrate that they are preserving the diversity of the species and wild population, adhering to strict feed requirements and ensuring social responsibility.
ASIA-PACIFIC AQUACULTURE EXPO 2016

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Asia-Pacific—the center of world aquaculture industry.

APA Expo—the sole aquaculture event in Asia-Pacific.


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Organizers
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Traceability
The ASC requires all companies processing certified seafood to have in place traceability systems that ensure that no product mixing or substitution can occur.

In order to achieve chain of custody certification, each company in the supply chain must meet strict requirements and have in place traceability systems that ensure no product mixing or substitutions can occur. Thanks to this requirement, certified seafood is fully traceable throughout the entire supply chain to ensure the future availability of seafood, the health of the ocean and the enduring livelihood of the local communities in which the farms operate.

The ASC program in China
The ASC is a market based program, designed to create incentives and reward responsible farming practices. It also promotes and rewards responsible fish farming though the use of the ASC on-pack logo, which helps consumers to make an informed choice in the supermarket. The logo assures buyers that the fish they purchase has been responsibly sourced, with minimal impacts on society and the environment, and is fully traceable back to a well-managed farm.

Through the use of the logo and assessment against robust standards, the ASC provides companies with a competitive advantage. European retailers and food service providers are keen to buy ASC certified products and increased ASC certification across Chinese tilapia farms will help drive access to western markets. Farms also immediately benefit from ASC certification with greater insights on supply volume, traceability and recognition for achievement of corporate and social responsibility goals.

There is still much to do to move the Chinese tilapia industry towards sustainability. Work continues to increase public access to detailed information on the tilapia supply chain and to promote responsible production and the wide adoption of the ASC standards. However, the dedication to this effort shown by all stakeholders is already creating valuable improvements in the industry.

Together with CAPPMA and WWF China, and other stakeholders, the ASC and its partners are supporting the Chinese tilapia industry implementing these improvements.

Tilapia

Many hands make for light work
Volunteers are the backbone of AwF. Highly trained professionals like you have a great deal to offer your colleagues in developing countries. Whether it’s sparing a little time to advise on one of our current aquaculture projects or donating some equipment, you and your organization can help in so many ways.

To volunteer, go to http://www.aquaculturewithoutfrontiers.org/volunteers/

Together we can achieve wonderful things.

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Marketing tilapia at the China Fisheries and Seafood Exposition in November 2015.