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RESEARCH REPORTS

SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE FOR A SECURE FUTURE

Title: Training and technical assistance in warm-water fish culture

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Abstract: A central issue for aquaculture development in Honduras is fingerling supply. Previous PD/A CRSP research reported that farmers in remote places found that fingerlings were difficult to obtain but did not consider this sufficient reason for withdrawing from fish farming. The Zamorano PI and his technician in this project confirmed that the Comayagua research station "El Carao" was not a reliable supplier of fingerlings for producers. Private fingerling producers are few and generally geared to supply large-scale commercial operations. The overriding objective of our work was to provide technical assistance and training to current and potential fingerling suppliers to small- and medium-scale tilapia producers in Honduras.

A Peace Corps program of technical support to fish farmers was possibly the most focused on-farm assistance to small-scale fish farmers in Honduras, but this program ended in 1995. The national extension program in aquaculture has a presence in many regions, but the effort is fragmented and under-funded. A large number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been active in rural development projects in Honduras, including several promoting fish farming, but expertise in this activity is often insufficient to provide critical technical information required for proper pond management.

During November 1999, we consulted with 13 representatives of national and international, government and non-government organizations. From these consultations, a strategy and timetable were developed for implementing technical assistance and training of fingerling

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suppliers and technicians working with NGOs currently, or potentially involved in small- and medium-scale fish culture development. At least 33 small- and medium-scale tilapia producers (each with 150 - 12,000 m² of water surface) and 26 restaurants were subsequently interviewed by the technical team to assess the production and marketing demands for tilapia in Honduras. With the collaboration of a local NGO, we invited representatives of NGOs with actual or potential interest in aquaculture development to a one-day seminar to describe opportunities and constraints for family-scale fish culture in Honduras. The Zamorano team continues to identify and provide technical assistance to regional fingerling producers and organizations involved in aquaculture extension. During the life of this activity three technical workshops were provided by Zamorano and Auburn for actual and prospective fingerling producers and extensionists. More than 30 publications on fingerling production and pond management practices have been incorporated in a web-based information system developed by a local NGO, primarily in response to needs of local NGOs.

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