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Workshop on the Timing of the Onset of Supplemental Feeding of Nile Tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) in Ponds

Ninth Work Plan, Adoption/Diffusion Research 6A (9ADR6A)
Final Report

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Abstract

Ninth Work Plan Feeds and Fertilizers research (9FFR4) has determined that delaying the onset of feeding in tilapia grow-out ponds reduces farmer investment while maintaining production levels. The application of these research results is encouraged, and a workshop was held at the Freshwater Aquaculture Center, Central Luzon State University, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, to extend the results to area farmers. Eight farmers participated in the workshop, which included both presentation of results and group discussion of impacts. Farmers who attended stated that they would immediately adopt the delayed feeding strategy. Since the workshop, farmers who heard of delayed feeding through word-of-mouth have already adopted the practice.

Summary

Following a successful on-farm trial conducted in seven farms in Nueva Ecija, Philippines ("Timing of the onset of supplemental feeding of Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) in ponds," 9FFR4), a workshop was held to disseminate the results to area farmers. Six of the seven participating farmers, and two additional farmers who have since volunteered to participate in the next round of trials, attended the meeting held at the Freshwater Aquaculture Center, Central Luzon State University (CLSU), Nueva Ecija, Philippines, on 6 December 1999. Other attendees included CLSU aquaculture students, faculty, and administrators.

Lunch was served to the guests and introductions were made, followed by a succinct presentation of farm trial results. These results included conclusive evidence that the postponement of initial feeding did not significantly compromise the performance of tilapia in terms of size, yield, uniformity, or crop value. The performance of sex-reversed Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) of the Genetically Improved Farmed Tilapia (GIFT) strain was equally impressive in all experimental conditions, and farmers were in agreement that those with the lowest operating cost were clearly the preferable feeding strategies. There was considerable discussion about the practical utility of these results.

Anticipated Benefits

Farmers attending this workshop expressed their gratitude for being allowed to participate in a project that they felt could help them directly. The delay in the initial provision of a locally milled feed consisting of rice bran and fish meal until the fish reached 75 days of age did not significantly reduce growth, survival, or other production parameters although grow-out costs were favorably impacted by this treatment. Consequently, many of the participating farmers indicated at the workshop that they planned to adopt this feeding strategy. The consensus among the farmers was that waiting for additional results would serve no particular purpose, as the results suggested convincingly enough that there is no point in beginning to pay for feed early in the grow-out when pond productivity obviously can support growth adequately; the profitability of this approach seemed intuitive to the farmers. Word-of-mouth has since spread, and other area farmers have been using this approach to reduce their operating costs. We believe it is unusual that results are converted into profitable techniques in the commercial sector this rapidly.

In general, we felt that this was a good and productive workshop. In critiquing it, we felt that it would have been beneficial to try to reach a broader audience.

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