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SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE FOR A SECURE FUTURE

Title: An overview of freshwater cage culture in Thailand

Author: C. Kwei Lin and K. Kaewpaitoon
Aquaculture and Aquatic Resources Management Program
Asian Institute of Technology
P.O. Box 4, Klong Luang, Pathumthani 12120
Thailand

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Abstract: Despite its long history and a large number of rivers and reservoirs in Thailand, cage culture contributed only 0.3% of 200,000 tons in total fish production from freshwater aquaculture. Over the last decade, the peak of annual fish production from freshwater cages reached 2,700 tons in 1991 and declined since to a minimum of 600 tons in 1995. Although cage culture takes place in various habitats such as river, reservoirs, irrigation canals and large ponds, its predominant habitats are in flowing waters. Among a dozen of cultured species, red snakehead (*Channa micropeltes*), catfish (*Pangasius* spp.), marble goby (*Oxyeleotris marmoratus*) and tilapia (*Oreochromis* spp.) topped the list. The production of those species fluctuated drastically resulting mainly from deteriorating water quality, competing for trash fish feed, changing market value, and shifting culture practices. However, disease and fingerling supply caused the reduction and limitation in culture of the most valued marble goby. Recently, the cage culture of tilapia has gained great popularity in certain parts of the country. Cage culture has been a small-scale, artisanal operation with little research and technical innovation. Further development of cage cultures in freshwater lies on ecologically sound multiple uses of reservoirs and flowing waters. In addition, integration of intensive cage culture with semi-intensive species in ponds should also be promoted.

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