

Present status of breeding and culture of catfishes in South Asia



The commercially important fish which contribute substantially to the total inland fish production in South Asia are *Aurichthys aor*, *A. seenghala*, *Mystus cavasius*, *M. gulio*, *Rita rita*, *Wallago attu*, *Ompok bimaculatus*, *Heteropneustes fossilis*, *Clarias batrachus*, *Silonia silondia* and *Pangasius pangasius*. These are widely distributed in all the South Asian countries; Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar except Bhutan and the Maldives. In comparison to carp culture, catfish culture has just begun in the region. Techniques of seed production have been standardized in *C. batrachus*, *H. fossilis* and *W. attu* which can be spawned even repeatedly at short intervals of 30-40 days. Such methods are, however, in an experimental stage for other species. *C. batrachus* is the most popular and its traditional culture in rice fields is well known. It is now being incorporated in carp ponds and semi-intensive and intensive monoculture systems have also been developed. The species fetches a very high price in India and Bangladesh and has a great export potential. *C. macrocephalus* and *C. gariepinus* have been introduced in

Bangladesh with considerable success but their impact on the indigenous species needs to be studied. A vast grow-out potential exists all over the region for small catfish in carp nurseries as a second crop. Extensive culture of large catfish in derelict ponds could be an intermediate step in their improvement through control of all trash fish. With increased seed availability, semi-intensive and intensive mono-culture systems, being tried experimentally, could be developed in the view of an industrial production of catfishes as new export items from the region, if conditions for proper water quality management, aeration and partial replenishment, and availability of adequate pelleted feed could be met.

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