

Development of Aquaculture in the Gulf States

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Abstract

This paper discusses the development of aquaculture in the countries of the Gulf Cooperating Council (GCC) with particular emphasis on Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Aquaculture in the GCC countries, with some notable exceptions, has been slow to develop, with investors reluctant to invest in aquaculture projects that do not produce quick returns. There have been some substantial shrimp farm developments in Saudi Arabia and smaller scale efforts in other countries but no concerted efforts, despite good access to marine waters and an amount of research undertaken by research institutes in the region on suitable local species. The picture in 2012 is one of untapped opportunity, now being addressed seriously by Governments and the private sector. Two drivers are identified, these being firstly the desire to diversify from economic reliance on the oil and gas sector, and secondly the realization that food security for GCC countries must be ensured with aquaculture being one of the tools to be utilized. Two examples will be used to demonstrate this. Firstly Oman where the Government has, during 2011, placed significant emphasis on aquaculture with an extensive site survey undertaken, new permitting arrangements and a drive to encourage and assist investors. This culminated in an international conference for aquaculture investors in December 2011. The second example will be the United Arab Emirates and specifically the Emirate of Abu Dhabi where the Government has encouraged aquaculture development and is implementing a suite of new policies to effectively manage development and encourage investment.