

Policy and strategy development in aquaculture in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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ABSTRACT

This paper briefly reviews the activities conducted during a one-day Training Workshop on Policy and Strategy Development in Aquaculture that was held on 1 November 2006 under the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) Project TCP/BiH/3101 “Strengthening Aquaculture Health Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. The workshop was convened to train participants on policy and strategy development in aquaculture to support the development of a National Aquatic Animal Health Strategy (NAAHS). A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis was used to assist participants in developing their thoughts, then a “vision” for a NAAHS was formulated and an outline of the contents for the NAAHS developed and agreed upon. The final activity was the preparation of a set of “Guiding Principles” that would be used in future development of the NAAHS. It was decided that the policy and strategy formulation process would be continued via an internal stakeholder workshop at which a further identification of the key principles would take place and the logical framework approach in support of the development of the policy and strategy would be followed.

INTRODUCTION

On 1 November 2006, a one-day Training Workshop on Policy and Strategy Development in Aquaculture was organized under the FAO Project TCP/BiH/3101 “Strengthening Aquaculture Health Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” The workshop was convened to train participants on policy and strategy development in aquaculture to support the development of the National Aquatic Animal Health Strategy (NAAHS). At the time when the workshop was organized, the policy and legal framework for aquaculture in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was weak. The workshop thus tried to support capacity-building efforts of the State Veterinary Office (SVO) in terms of planning and policy development.

The training session started with a presentation on Policy and Strategy Development in the Aquaculture Sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A short introduction was

provided on the current state of aquaculture in the world, referring to the image of aquaculture outside the sector, then the way forward was discussed, as well as constraints to aquaculture development in the country. It was explained why a NAAHS was requested by the Government, and the steps in a strategic planning process that should be taken by the project were outlined.

The steps to be taken in the NAAHS planning process were the following:

- identify what Bosnia and Herzegovina needs in terms of planning (e.g. policy, strategy, plan);
- decide if the NAAHS is for Government purposes only or if it will be directed to the aquaculture sector as a whole;
- determine if the information required for the planning process is available and if not, how it will be obtained; and
- decide who should participate in the planning process.

SWOT ANALYSIS

It was suggested to start with a situational analysis. Some tools were presented for this purpose and it was decided that a so called “SWOT” (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) listing would suit the purpose best, as it was known to a number of the participants and as some presented examples clearly demonstrated what the listing could bring in support of the planning and policy development process. A preliminary SWOT listing of the aquatic animal health situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina that was undertaken by the working groups resulted in the following outcomes:

Strengths

- Water resources (rivers, lakes, sea) offer a large potential to increase production.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina has a very good health status with regard to the infectious fish diseases listed by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).
- The human resources involved in aquatic animal health are of high quality, and thus quick adoption of all technological achievements is possible.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina has a long tradition in aquaculture, dating to 1892.
- There is a relatively good relationship between fish breeders and processors.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina has a great diversity of fish species that can be cultured.
- The competent authorities (CA) have recognized that aquaculture is an important branch of the agriculture/rural sector.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina has competent institutions dealing with infectious disease control in aquaculture.
- There is a readiness to invest by the private sector.

Weaknesses

- A Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) does not exist at the state level (however, legislation is under review).
- Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a National Aquaculture Development Strategy.
- The majority of the farmers are not familiar with the health risks and means of aquatic animal health control.
- Aquatic animal health laboratories in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not internationally accredited.
- Aquatic animal health laboratories in Bosnia and Herzegovina are poorly equipped.

Opportunities

- The establishment of the relevant CAs on a state level (MoA) is possible.
- The establishment of uniform databases through international projects can be accomplished.

- Access to international information exchange systems (e.g. AVIS, RASFF, TRACES, WAHIS) is available.¹
- Education in aquatic animal health issues can be supported through international projects such as those funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Union (EU).
- The current FAO TCP project is supporting the development of a NAAHS, as well as the improvement of the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for viral fish diseases.
- The signing of the the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with Bosnia and Herzegovina by the EU Member States, which would bring the country closer to EU accession.²
- The joining of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which is a trade agreement between Non-EU countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe; joining CEFTA would harmonize trade standards that are important to animal import and export (including aquatic animals).
- The inclusion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the list of the European Community (EC) third countries approved for export of fish and fish products to the EU market is possible.

Threats

- The aquaculture sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks market competitiveness.
- There may be insufficient interest by international markets in Bosnia and Herzegovina aquaculture products.
- Construction of hydroelectrical power dams on rivers and lakes used by fish farms may constrain the expansion of aquaculture.
- Lack of coordination between services that jointly deal with the process of construction of the fish farms and processing plants may hinder development of the sector.
- National standards may be developed more quickly by neighboring countries than by Bosnia and Herzegovina, giving them a competitive advantage.
- Sustainable development of the sector could be constrained by an absence of all relevant competent authorities at the state level.

While it was recognized that the above lists are incomplete, at the same time participants felt that they could provide a good basis for continuing the policy development and planning process. The next steps in the process addressed policy and strategy formulation, making use of a logical framework approach.

DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL AQUATIC ANIMAL HEALTH STRATEGY (NAAHS)

A presentation on the possible contents of a National Aquatic Animal Health Strategy (NAAHS) was given and a structure was proposed for discussion. It was agreed that the document should contain the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Justification
4. Long-term vision

¹ AVIS – Advanced Veterinary Information System; RASFF – Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed; TRACES – TRAdE Control and Expert System; WAHIS – World Animal Health Information System.

² On 3 May 2007, the EU Member States approved the text of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The conclusion of this Agreement could bring Bosnia and Herzegovina a step closer to the EU. For more information see: www.eu2007.de/en/News/CFSP_Statements/May/0510Bosnian.html (accessed 19 January 2009).

5. Principles
 6. Timeframe
 7. Monitoring mechanism
 8. Overall goals
 9. Specific objectives
- Annexes
- Indicators for monitoring/risks and assumptions

Vision

The participants were asked to start the NAAHS policy formulation process through a working group discussion session whereby specific emphasis was given to the formulation of a long-term vision for aquatic animal health in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The workshop decided that the following draft long-term vision best reflects their views: *“To develop and maintain up-to-date an aquatic animal health management strategy in BiH that will be able to support the sustainable development and management of the aquaculture sector and meet growing consumer demands for aquatic foods and products that are of high quality, safe, competitively priced and are produced in an environmentally responsible manner with maximum opportunity for profitability in all stages of the aquaculture product chain”*. This draft long-term vision was used for the development of policy at a later stage.

Guiding principles

The workshop made an effort to discuss and agree upon the guiding principles for the NAAHS. The participants decided that the principles should be largely based on those listed below, adding a principle referring to the fact that the State Veterinary Office (SVO) would be the main authority supporting the implementation of the policy and strategy and stressing that all processes should be transparent.

Principles purely focused on aquatic animal health that were modified from *Health Management for the Responsible Movement of Live Aquatic Animals* (FAO, 2007) include:

- 1) Aquatic animal health is important for economic, social, development and public resource purposes. Collaboration among all stakeholders including governments, public institutions, the private sector and existing aquaculture and fishing industries is important to achieve effective health management.
- 2) The role of aquatic animal health management is to reduce the risks arising from the culture, reproduction, potential entry, establishment or spread of pathogens and the diseases they cause. This is necessary to protect living aquatic resources, the natural aquatic environment and the aquatic biodiversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighbouring regions, countries or territories.
- 3) Bosnia and Herzegovina may introduce or maintain sanitary measures resulting in a higher level of protection than would be achieved by measures based on the relevant international standards, guidelines or recommendations (e.g. the OIE *Aquatic Animal Health Code* – OIE, 2007); however, such measures must be justifiable based on science (i.e. risk analysis) and be consistent with the country’s acceptable level of protection (ALOP). Control measures applied to movements of aquatic animals within the country must also be consistent with this ALOP.
- 4) The aquatic animal health strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina and related procedures will adhere to international and regional standards and be harmonized on as wide a basis as possible.
- 5) SVO encourages the Bosnia and Herzegovina aquaculture sector to use preventative measures to limit their exposure to pathogens and disease. Such measures include but are not limited to the use of better management practices (BMP), health certification, specific pathogen free (SPF) and high health (HH) stocks, biosecurity and vaccination protocols.

- 6) Health management measures will be effective, practical, cost-effective and utilize readily available resources. These resources will allow the development of appropriate national and regional policies and regulatory frameworks as required to reduce the aquatic animal health risks incorporated in the culture, reproduction and movement of aquatic animals.
- 7) Access to relevant national aquatic animal health capacity (infrastructure and specialized expertise) is crucial for health management of aquatic animals. Collaboration with international organizations and countries in the European region will be sought wherever possible to further increase Bosnia and Herzegovina's capacity in aquatic animal health issues.

Guiding principles of a more generic nature focusing on the socio-economic, environmental and stewardship aspects of the NAAHS include:

- 8) The economic principle: aquatic animal health management should enable aquaculture to make a positive contribution to the economy through being internationally competitive in the marketplace and economically viable at a national level.
- 9) The environmental principle: the aquatic animal health management measures should facilitate aquaculture to develop in harmony with nature, managing and minimizing transient environmental impacts and avoiding significant, cumulative, long-term or irreversible changes to ecosystems, to cultural remains or to valued landscape and scenery.
- 10) The social principle: Aquatic animal health measures should foster strong aquaculturists' links, recognizing and supporting the needs of private-sector aquaculturists and working with community initiatives to manage local environments for mutual benefit.
- 11) The principle of stewardship as applied to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the first three principles relate to outcomes, the principle of stewardship relates to the ways in which these principles will be observed. It is about delivering outcomes sustainably. The principle of stewardship embraces the precepts of transparency, integration, coordinated government and fit-for purpose regulation, partnership and stakeholder participation, accountability, ethics and regard for animal welfare, and a culture of best practice and continuous improvement.

THE WAY FORWARD

It was decided that an internal stakeholder workshop would be held in which the policy and strategy formulation process would be continued. At that workshop a further identification of the key principles would take place and the logical framework approach (which was outlined through a presentation in the training workshop) in support of the development of the policy and strategy would be followed.

The training workshop concluded with a presentation on the FAO *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* (CCRF) (FAO, 1995) to provide the necessary background for the next steps in the development process of the NAAHS. Specific emphasis was placed on the participatory stakeholder process that resulted in the widely endorsed Code and on Article 9 of the Code on aquaculture development.

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