

A regional shellfish hatchery for the Wider Caribbean

Assessing its feasibility and sustainability

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It is widely recognized that the development of aquaculture in the Wider Caribbean Region is inhibited, in part, by the lack of technical expertise, infrastructure, capital investment and human resources. Furthermore, seed supply for native species relies, for the most part, on natural collection, subject to natural population abundance with wide yearly variations. This situation has led to the current trend of culturing more readily available exotic species, but with a potentially undesirable impact on the natural environment. The centralizing of resources available in the region into a shared facility has been recommended by several expert meetings over the past 20 years. The establishment of a regional hatchery facility, supporting sustainable aquaculture through the seed production of native molluscan species was discussed at the FAO workshop “Regional shellfish hatchery: A feasibility study” held in Kingston, Jamaica, in October 2010, by representatives of Caribbean Governments and experts in the field. Molluscan species are particularly targeted due to their culture potential in terms of known techniques, simple grow-out technology and low impact on surrounding environment. It is proposed that a regional molluscan hatchery would produce seed for sale and distribution to grow-out operations in the region as well as provide technical support for the research on new species. The current document summarizes the findings of the workshop and outlines four follow-up recommendations on steps required for the successful implementation of a regional facility. The positive response of participating Caribbean Governments demonstrates the current political will for sustainable aquaculture growth in the region, supported by several national plans including the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism Strategic Plan.

