

be the significant reduction in the supply of aquatic vegetables consumed on a daily basis by Phnom Penh's citizens. Finally the lake is a unique functioning example of multifunctional, integrated re-use of (waste) water within the confines and pressures of a rapidly growing Southeast Asian city, which is surely worth preserving. What will be the future in terms of the livelihoods of the many households currently living and depending on the lake and its capacity to provide income from aquatic vegetable production whilst also performing as a low cost, environmentally friendly bio-treatment facility for the city's waste water?

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First Latin American & Third Mexican Conference on Culture of Native Fish Species

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Biodiversity is extremely rich in much of Central and South America and so uncontrolled introductions of exotic fishes, or any other species for that matter, are cause for concern. Many Latin American countries are facing up to this reality and, for example, in Chile (the biggest aquaculture producer in the region by far) biodiversity issues are already a prime consideration with introductions and translocations now being very tightly regulated.

Through a series of conferences associated with collaborative projects on the endangered pescado blanco *Chirostoma estor estor*, reported in Aquaculture News 31, Professor Lindsay Ross, Dr Carlos Martinez Palacios and partners have raised the profile of the need for sustainable aquaculture development while conserving and protecting indigenous species. These projects have received significant funding from the Darwin Initiative, who further supported the previously Mexican focused conferences that have now been broadened to include all Latin American countries. Hence between 18th and 20th October 2006, the First Latin American and Third Mexican Conference on Native Fish Species for Aquaculture were jointly held in the "Casa de Gobierno", Morelia, Mexico.

The meeting

The conference was extremely successful and was attended by approximately 100 researchers. A series of 10 talks by invited keynote speakers from Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Japan, Canada and UK was interspersed with 24 selected experience papers from across the continent covering a wide range of species and subject areas. In order to reach as wide an audience in the continent as possible, both during and after the conference, almost all talks were given in Spanish or in "Portuñol".

The first half of the meeting explored the wide variety of Latin American marine species, with leading presentations by Dr Daniel Bennetti of the University of Miami, Dr Andrei Sampaio of the Universidade do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil, and Dr Luis Lajonchere, CIAD, Mazatlan, Mexico.

The second half of the meeting focused principally on freshwater species, with leading presentations by Dr Phil Scott of Universidade Santa Ursula, Rio de Janeiro, Dr Carlos Strussman of the University of Fisheries, Tokyo, Dr Gustavo Somoza of IINTECH Argentina, Dr Roberto Mendoza of Universidad de Nuevo Leon Mexico, Dr Alfonso Mardones of Universidad de Temuco Chile and Dr Carlos Martinez of INIRENA Mexico.

Dr Alfonso Mardones gave a superb summary of the developmental work behind culture of Puye (*Galaxias*) in Chile, a small fish which commands a massive price in the international market (\$600/kg), leading on to a wide ranging consideration of other native species in the region.

Prizes were award for the best student posters, judged by four of our invited speakers. The first prize was divided between Lidia Ambriz Cervantes (INIRENA-UMSNH) and F.Ribeiro (UFSC-Brazil).

Day four brought the meeting to a close with a relaxing field visit to our pilot farm and demonstration site at Ichupio, Tzintzuntzan, where a trial netting assured us that our fish were doing well. To everyone's delight, the family prepared a huge lunch of fried charales (small Atherinids) with fresh hand-made tortillas accompanied by fresh salsas and chillies.

The future

Staging this conference has had the major effect of focusing the interest of many key people on the issues of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), use of native species in aquaculture development as well as use of aquaculture as a powerful tool to maintain biodiversity and livelihoods. The pressure on nations to comply with CBD is also giving a strong impulsion to indigenous species development, even extending to changes in the law regarding importations. There could be many species currently under threat, even extending to extinction, and a reconsideration of the effects and future role of aquaculture linked to conservation is timely. The approach of the present Darwin Initiative project has given a lead to many workers who need to contend with this new situation.

The event has already spawned further meetings on native fish species for aquaculture in Brazil, Argentina and Chile as well as the strong prospect of a series of biennial pan-Latin American meetings to follow up this one. This is a very significant measure of success for the DI project and the timeliness of our original concept.

The conference website has been transformed into a reporting and linking point for all interested in this vital topic; see: <http://www.aqua.stir.ac.uk/GISAP/Conference/> where you will also find a full list of our sponsors.