



GNAA TRAINING COURSE FOR FISH FARMERS TAKES OFF



The GNAA's programme of equipping fish farmers with vital skills for optimizing production took off at the Nzulezo Church of Pentecost Hall on Tuesday, 25th September. 70 fish farmers in the Jomoro Municipality of the Western Region gathered together for a very fruitful interaction which is certain to make a meaningful impact on fish farming in the area.

The objective of the GNAA is to raise the level of skills and awareness of fish farmers in all regions and districts, through an initial physical interaction, followed by information sharing and online meetings. Most of the thousands of fish farmers in Ghana are small farmers, most of whom started their ventures with very little guidance and are currently 'managing' with the knowledge at their disposal. Fish farming being a skilled operation, this can only achieve limited results. The Association believes that by equipping these farmers with some basic skills and information, they can optimize production to levels that will make an impact on national output. The Association therefore plans to reach virtually every farmer in Ghana with basic information for running a fish farm along sustainable and profitable lines.

Another objective of the programme is to enable them to go through the permit and certification process of the Fisheries Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The National Organizer, Francis de Heer, started by stating the importance of the small farmer to national fish output, emphasizing that with the right provision of skills and information, the small farmer can earn decent profit, and help raise national output beyond targeted levels so that Ghana can save the funds currently spent on fish imports. He stressed the importance of skills acquisition for profitable production, and said that the bulk purchase arrangement started by the Association will only work when buyers can be assured of good

quality fish.

The District Director of the Fisheries Commission, Mr. Isaac Frimpong, took participants through various aspects of the fish farming operation like the soundness of the pond to water quality and measurement to fish health to feed management and marketing. He said that by going through the Commission's permit process, they place their farms on sound footing, assured them of the Commission's willingness to assist them at various stages of their operations. Mr. Joe Asiama, District Director of the EPA, explained the Agency's certification process, and said it is intended to guide the fish farmer to profitable production. Both Mr. Frimpong and Mr. Asiama assured farmers that the EPA and the FC are public agencies that are not interested in closing down farms but to help them operate profitably.

Mr. James Aidoo, CEO of Honey Milk Farms and Western Region Representative of the Association, said that most farmers in the area have been facing challenges due to their small size. He encouraged participants to work together to obtain solutions they face. After some lively discussions, they agreed to join hands and hold regular meetings.

The Association, in collaboration with Mr. Frimpong and Mr. Asiama, is planning follow-up meetings, and arrangements are being made to secure reliable supplies of fingerlings, feed and other inputs for the farmers in the area.

The Jomoro programme provides a valuable template which can be deployed elsewhere. Efforts are being made to secure resources for strengthening the programme. The Executive of the GNAA is determined to ensure that aquaculture becomes a truly profitable occupation, making a massive contribution to national output.

NEW FISHERIES LAW NEARING COMPLETION

The final draft of the new Fisheries law was validated by fisheries industry stakeholders at a workshop in Kumasi on 19th and 20th December. A month earlier, it had been subjected to rigorous discussion and debate in Kumasi by stakeholders. It will now be finalized and sent to Parliament, and Ghana is expected to have a new Fisheries Law quite soon. The new Law will include several changes and some new features which will strengthen to governance and management of Ghana's fisheries resources.

The validation programme was led by Ms. Doris Yeboah,

retired Director at the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and a member of the Executive of the Ghana National Aquaculture Association. She took participants through the changes that had been made during the discussions on the draft, and participated in the validation process. She expressed her optimism that the new Law will serve the Fisheries industry well. 'We ensured that all stakeholders had been brought in to share their views. All issues were subjected to lively discussion, and I believe that Parliament will approve what will be sent. I'm confident that the new Law will be fit for purpose'.

Group picture, with Ms. Yeboah (middle)



Group discussion



Group discussion



National Organizer with Kelvin 'Systems' Asuma

**WE NEED
YOUR HELP**

The Association is taking some major steps to serve the interests of fish farmers and we need your help.

1. We have just concluded arrangements for renting office space strategically located in the compound of the Ministry of Information in Accra.
2. We are rolling out a series of courses aimed at enabling farmers to optimize production. The first course comes off at the Jomoro District on Tuesday, 10th September.
3. We are making arrangements for national elections to choose officers to serve the Association.

These projects require funding. You can help us achieve these objectives by sending your annual subscription fee of 100 cedis. Or you can make a further donation. Please make payment to the National Treasurer,

Mrs. Mabel Quarshie, MoMo number
053 811 3345

or you can pay into the Association's ADB bank account 1010168445501

Thank you

IT IS TIME FOR HETEROTIS!!



The concept of species diversification is gaining prominence, especially in Nigeria. The idea is that catfish, the main species being cultivated by fish farmers, has only brought limited results to fish farmers, and that it is time to deploy other species, especially those species which seem to have some natural advantages. In the last few years, quite a number of local and foreign species have been introduced into the system, and some hatcheries are offering fingerlings for sale. Industry associations, including the Catfish Farmers Association of Nigeria, is encouraging farmers to increase their profits by diversifying. Among the species being promoted are Pacu, Pangasius, Rohu, rahma and common Carp.

The average Nigerian consumes 13 kg fish per capita. This is small compared to Ghana's 25 kg, but for a nation of 200 million people, this amounts to quite a substantial quantity of fish. The annual demand for fish is 3.6 million metric tonnes, but local production accounts for only 1.2 million metric tonnes, and a whopping 1.2 billion dollars is spent every year to import fish. As in many African countries, marine production has declined sharply over the years, and aquaculture is believed to have a good chance to plug the gap. Local production accounts for 300,000 metric tonnes, and the recent species diversification drive is aimed at maximizing aquaculture production. Over 80% of fish farmers produce catfish.

The main considerations underpinning the diversification drive are market acceptability, bigger harvest sizes in good time, less spending on fish feed, sturdiness and tolerance of high stocking densities. The new species mentioned above offer almost all these benefits, and therefore enable farmers to earn good money. However, they are mostly foreign species, and concerns have been expressed by some experts about potential dangers for the local ecosystem. The experts say that before these fish species were introduced into the local environment, they should have been assessed by local fisheries authorities, and even cultivated on trial basis for some time, before commercial production was allowed. Although they are being cultivated in enclosed environments, the chances of their escape into local water bodies are very high. The experts have cited the example of Pacu, one of the fishes which has been introduced into parts of India. Concern has been raised that this and other non-native species, which are being grown on fish farms, pose serious risks to local water bodies, and that steps should be taken to study them before they cause serious damage.

In Ghana, species diversification has been a topic for

discussion for some time now, but apart from some illegal attempts, tilapia and catfish are the main species being grown commercially. Some experts are expressing the opinion that these two species are yet to achieve the national goal of producing abundant, affordable protein for fish-loving Ghanaians, and steps should be taken to improve the situation. They suggest the improvement of local species. Several farmers culture other fish species on their farms but fingerlings or broodfish for such species are collected from the wild. Indeed, one species that has the potential to provide a viable solution is the *Heterotis niloticus*, also known as the African bony tongue, which is native to Ghana and many African countries.

Heterotis, also known in Ghana as 'superku', is found in our lakes and rivers. It has been cultured by fish farmers for some time, mostly under polyculture. However, attempts at commercial production have been hindered by a few challenges. First, attempts at multiplication are frustrated by the difficulty in sex determination. Second, multiplication has been further frustrated by the difficulty in producing fingerlings. It prefers to lay and hatch eggs in grass growth in water bodies. And third, it has so far not easily accepted commercial feed. However, the Association is seeking to mobilize information from ongoing research work at the Department of Fisheries Watershed Management, KNUST and the experienced farmers, to promote increased cultivation by farmers. The Department and some fish farmers have agreed to share information, and to also increase their efforts to produce fingerlings which will be shared with interested farmers in due time. One way of enhancing the achievement of results would be to provide funding for the research work at KNUST and other institutions working on *Heterotis*. We urge potential funders to help achieve this laudable goal. It is also important that farmers and researchers share their knowledge and experiences so that research questions are well defined and provided the needed information and skills ready to use by farmers.

Among the advantages of *Heterotis* are its ability to grow beyond 2 kg within a year, its high protein content and its hardiness. It has the potential to be a game changer in Ghana's aquaculture, and we appeal to anyone who can assist realize this dream to help.

NEW PRODUCT

R AND B FARMS' FINGERLINGS CARRIER WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR SALE SHORTLY

R and B Farms appreciates the interest shown in its new product, the Fingerlings Carrier.

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AKOSOMBO WORKSHOP MARKS CLOSURE OF AQUATIC ANIMAL HEALTH PROJECT

The curtain was drawn on the Aquatic Animal Health (AHA) Project at a closure workshop at Akosombo on September 26. Under the Project, six Ghanaians completed MPhil Aquaculture programmes in Fish Health at the Department of Marine and Fisheries Sciences at the University of Ghana. The six graduates are entering the Aquaculture industry at a time when their services are greatly needed. The Ghana National

Aquaculture Association congratulates them, and wishes to assure them of their support to make their careers very rewarding. The six students are Philip Kwasi Banini, Kofi Ferni Anyan, Mabel Ackah, David Batsa, Abigail Amankwah and Issifu Kwame.

Below are pictures from that memorable occasion.



Mabel Ackah, one of the students receiving a gift from Dr. Edgar Brun, from Norwegian Veterinary Institute



Left to right: Dr. Shima Ali, Dr. Edgar Brun and Dr. Kofitsoe Cudjoe, all of the Norwegian Veterinary Institute



Mr. Issifu Kwame, one of the graduating students, receiving a present from Dr. Edgar Brun



Dr. Edgar Brun congratulates Dr. Sam Addo, project coordinator



GHANA NATIONAL AQUACULTURE ASSOC.



Members of the Ghana National Aquaculture Assoc. will go to the polls to elect new officers for a four year term. Any member may put himself/herself forward or nominate another person for the following positions:

President

Treasurer

Secretary

Organiser

A list of Nominees will be presented by 10th January, and voting will be done on Tuesday; January 28th. Results will be announced the following day. Please complete the membership re-registration form if you haven't already done so, and pay the annual subscription fee of 100 Cedis to the National Treasurer; on MoMo number + 233 53 811 3345



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PRODUCTS VERY SOON**

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