

Message from Hiroshi Ogata

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On behalf of the Organizing Committee, I have much pleasure in being with you, here in Bangkok, Thailand, to attend the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) International Workshop on Emerging Fish Diseases in Asia. First of all, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Siri Ekmaharaj, Secretary-General, SEAFDEC, and Dr. Joebert Toledo, Chief, Aquaculture Department of SEAFDEC (SEAFDEC AQD), for their kind support of this conference. I would also like to express my appreciation to the plenary speakers, presenters of contributed papers (oral and poster), session moderators, workshop moderators/rapporteurs/discussants, and the conference evaluator. I wish, in addition, to thank the Fisheries Agency of the Government of Japan for the financial support and cooperation we received in organizing and conducting this international workshop.

In the last two decades, aquaculture in Southeast Asia grew rapidly and contributed to the increase of food supply and well-being of the people in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region. However, due to careless health management, a large number of infectious diseases emerged that are threatening sustainable aquaculture. The occurrence of fish diseases has not only led to low production, but also to food safety and environmental issues.

To counter these problems and to meet the challenges of sustainable and responsible aquaculture, the Government of Japan-Trust Fund (GOJ-TF) funded two SEAFDEC regional fish disease projects. These were an offshoot of the Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region adopted by ASEAN-SEAFDEC Senior Officials during the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Conference on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security in the New Millennium: Fish for the People, held in Thailand in November 2001. Among others, the conference featured the following fish health issues for aquaculture in the region: (a) reduce the risks of disease transfer by regulating the introduction and transfer of aquatic organisms and (b) improve capabilities in the diagnosis and control of fish diseases within the region by developing technology and techniques.

As such, a regional fish disease project entitled Development of Fish Disease Inspection Methodologies for Artificially-Bred Seeds was implemented from 2000 to 2004. The project focused on the development of diagnostic methods for important viral diseases of aquatic animals in the region. Research on the development of standardized diagnostic methods, husbandry methods for disease control, and a monitoring method for residual chemicals in aquaculture products was conducted. The outputs of this project were disseminated to ASEAN countries. Issues and studies were identified for the implementation of the project during the International Workshop entitled SEAFDEC/OIE (Office International des Epizooties) Seminar/Workshop on Disease Control in Fish and Shrimp Aquaculture in Southeast Asia - Diagnosis and Husbandry Techniques, held in Iloilo, Philippines, in December 2001.

Given these considerations, SEAFDEC AQD proposed a new GOJ-TF project entitled Development of Fish Disease Surveillance System for 2005 to 2009. The goal of this project is to develop a surveillance system for diseases of aquatic animals in Southeast Asia. Various infectious diseases attributed to viruses, bacteria, and parasites often cause high mortalities of fish and shrimps cultured in the region with serious impact on aquaculture production. Thus, tak-

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ing necessary measures against economically-important infectious fish diseases is an urgent and important issue to aquaculture in the region. Major activities for SEAFDEC AQD as a regional technology center for the health of aquatic animals consist of the following components: (a) research and development on refinement of diagnostic methods and development of new prevention methods for aquatic animal diseases, (b) surveillance of important viral diseases of fish and shrimps in the region, and mobile clinics, (c) E-learning and hands-on training, and (d) annual progress and planning meetings, and an international workshop on fish disease surveillance in the region.

SEAFDEC AQD has been making a significant contribution internationally by promoting regional fish disease projects and disseminating the project achievements, especially in Southeast Asia. The objectives of this conference and the included workshop are to update on emerging fish and shellfish microbial diseases in East and Southeast Asia, to keep abreast on advances in the pathogenesis, diagnosis, epidemiology, and surveillance of emerging microbial diseases of said aquatic animals, and to identify study gaps. This workshop will review emerging fish diseases, exchange views and opinions among the participants, and discuss the future orientation of fish disease studies. Therefore, I look forward to your active discussions.

Although this two-day workshop will not offer immediate solutions to the fish disease problems we are facing, I am convinced that the information and the results of the discussions will contribute to the common goal of promoting sustainable and responsible aquaculture.

I am looking forward to a very productive workshop and wish to extend my cordial welcome to all the participants and guests.

Thank you.