

AGRO BUSINESS

ORNAMENTAL FISH CULTURE AND EXPORTS

.....New Prospects in Nigeria

A leading United States Authority on Ornamental Fish breeding and exports, Dr H.R. Axelrod estimated the annual retail fish trade on a world-wide basis to be in US\$4 billion. Florida tropical fish slightly over 200 people are in the and have a total of \$170,000.000 worth shipped to pet stores annually. This closely followed by the Singaporean farmers with a total value of about 96 Hong Kong dollars worth of fish Pet Stores in 1997.



value of excess of farmers of forefront of fishes figure is fish million shipped to

An estimated 85% of all tropical aquarium fish sold in industrialized countries are imported. In some countries, the figure is reportedly as high as 95 percent. Exports from Asia particularly from a few South East Asian suppliers account for over 60 percent of the total export trade. South America is next with a market share of nearly 30 per cent. The trade in Africa is yet to be developed; its current share in international trade is estimated at not more than 2 percent. Of this, Nigeria's contribution is between 10-20 percent by a low contribution considering the fact that the country has more than 100 varieties of indigenous fresh water ornamental fish species of which a substantial proportion cannot be bred in captivity. What are the reasons for these discrepancies and how do we bridge the gap?

Governmental Recognition

So far, the Nigerian government has recognised only artisanal and reservoir fisheries, fresh water tilapia/catfish farming, Carp and Shrimp farming and hatchery production of fish babies. Neither Industrial Status nor farming grade has been given to ornamental fish culture nor has the export of ornamental fish in the past been neglected. At present, export of live tropical fish is meagre, the fishes around the river Niger and Benue and their tributaries should be exploited as an alternative to fishing during the off season. Also, mass production of ornamental fish via farming should be encouraged.

The Techniques

As ornamental fish are delicate, semi-intensive or intensive culture methods are the most suitable, the techniques for which is lacking. At present most ornamentals are grown indoors in cement, glass or plastic tanks.

A detailed knowledge of biology, habitat, feeding and breeding is essential for large scale and mass production of ornamental fish, though a lot of information is now available. The Precise Technical Know-how on the breeding and successful rearing of particular species is generally lacking particularly for large operations. In order to avoid mortalities, handling and transportation methods has to be perfected. The breeding of marine ornamentals like the sea horses whose males carries the pregnancy has not been seriously considered as at yet, although most marine specimens fetch premium process world over. The latest technology of induced breeding by using pituitary extracts, ovaprim and HCG obtained from the urine of pregnant women and so on may be taught to the needy that are producing fish for export.

With the right knowledge, Nigeria will be able to produce species and strains of ornamental fishes with attractive colours and patterns.

The Economics

The economics and profitability of an ornamental fish exports would need to be worked out by the Federal Fisheries Department although Mr. Fish Ltd has worked a feasibility which can be made available on request.

If properly organised, Nigerian farms could play a vital role and contribute a considerable share to both the international markets. provided to the farmers technically and exporting countries to in exports and quality proper assistance, can achieve a turnover Dollars over the next about a hundred

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whole country, only very few are active. Whereas, the number of people engaged in ornamental fish breeding are about twenty fulltime and fifty part-time. Most of them concentrate on the local market and ECOWAS sub-region with only one exporting.

Breeding

Ornamental fish breeding has been given industrial status by many South African countries like Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, and etc. but Nigeria is yet to pick up the momentum. It should be realized that apart from being a very profitable business, only those people with a love for fish can make headway in the venture. Even uneducated fellows can be trained in

culture techniques to achieve a low cost production. The government of Bangkok has graded its ornamental fish culture industry as a cottage industry, and Aquarium fish culture alongside agriculture during off seasons. The cost of feed and water for ornamental fish is 20% as against 70% for food fish hence this can be easily cultured in far flung places like Sokoto, Maiduguri, Katsina where water availability is limited and can be transported down South to coastal states.

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Beginners think in terms of a glass tank measuring 60cm x 30cm to hold 24 parent fish of 2.5cm in size or 12 parent fish of 5cm. Our average water temperature of between 24-30°C is about the best in the world to breed ornamental fish.

Research Institute/Centres

This could be established in the cities to establish fish quality and help the private farm owners to adopt the same that if the other like Florida in U.S, Kong, etc.

The need for training recognised in Nigeria years but as far as we

exist in the world that offers specialized training in this regard. Although many have short courses covering key topics e.g. Dr. Ruth Flyod in Florida U.S, Dr. Basleer in Belgium and Dr. David Huchzermeyer in South Africa and Brother Muyiwa Adediran of Mr. Fish Ltd Lagos, Nigeria. These trainers are providing the industries not only with the result of Research in the specialised areas of fish husbandry and fish farming but also with a cadre of knowledgeable personnel with hands on experience.

Government bodies should assist the small scale farmers and entrepreneurs with subsidies and grants to encourage this trade. It is in this area that FEAP, NERFUND, UNIDO, etc should come in and do something.

It is time to ACT FAST & MAKE THE RIGHT MOVE!

Israel Muiyiwa Adediran is of Mr. Fish Ltd., Lagos.



Fish Shipment Fact File

Typical Income Statement of A Small Beginner Shipper
Shipment to Europe of 28 Boxes of Fish 3,900 Pieces of fish
viz: Longnose, Reed, Butterfly, Debauwi and Robertsii.

Contact Mr Fish Limited for more information

standard of quality as exporting countries Singapore, Hong has been for the past 10 know three schools