

editorial

The roots of the WorldFish Center lie in Asia and the Pacific, where we started as ICLARM in 1977. But as the Center has developed and our global reach has expanded, so our focus on poverty alleviation and food security has drawn us to invest steadily in Africa. From starting our first work in Malawi in 1986, through projects in Sierra Leone and Ghana between 1990 and 1995, the opening of our regional center at Abbassa in Egypt in 1997, to the establishment of our new program in Cameroon in 2000, we have built a substantive program and presence on the African continent.

Looking forward to the challenges facing fisheries and aquaculture in the coming decades, the Center has long recognized that our investment in Africa needs to be increased even further. To guide this investment we have now developed a Strategy for Africa and West Asia for 2002-2006 and are currently moving ahead to implement this. The present issue of *NAGA* introduces the Strategy, while also reporting on a number of key issues that the Center is working on to address.

Africa's capture fisheries contribute to the livelihoods of some 15 million people and provide the principal source of animal protein for many millions more. Well managed, these resources can continue to play an important role in nutrition and livelihoods across large parts of the continent, notably in the coastal regions, along the shores of lakes and reservoirs, and throughout the continent's extensive river systems. Yet many of these resources are undervalued and rarely feature in planning and management processes. The articles by Rudy van de Elst, Robin Welcomme, and Christophe Bene and Arthur Neiland explore several of the critical issues facing these systems and point towards approaches that may help address these.

Despite their importance, however, Africa's capture fisheries alone cannot meet the growing demand for fish. The per capita consumption of fish has declined in several countries in Africa in recent years. WorldFish believes that aquaculture has great potential to meet this demand and become an effective component of agriculture and rural development strategies across large parts of the continent. However, the Center's experience in Malawi, Ghana and Cameroon underlines that this will only happen where the right technical solutions are applied in social, economic and institutional contexts that are conducive to aquaculture adoption. The article by D.M. Jamu and O.A. Ayinla examines this potential.

By developing our new regional strategy, the WorldFish Center recognizes the need for long-term investment in Africa. We also recognize the importance of building and working through effective partnerships in order to achieve the breadth and depth of impact that we believe is required. Over the course of the coming years we will be strengthening our partnerships in Africa and we invite the readers of *NAGA* who are working in the region to contact the Center.

Meryl J. Williams
WorldFish Center



Our commitment:

WorldFish Center is committed to contributing to food security and poverty eradication in developing countries.

We aim for:

- poverty eradication;
- a healthier, better nourished human family;
- reduced pressure on fragile natural resources; and
- people-centered policies for sustainable development.

A way to achieve this:

Through research, partnership, capacity building and policy support, we promote sustainable development and use of living aquatic resources based on environmentally sound management. The research thrusts are:

- improving productivity;
- protecting the environment;
- saving biodiversity;
- improving policies; and
- strengthening national programs.

We believe this work will be most successful when undertaken in partnership with national governments and nongovernmental institutions, and with the participation of users of the research results.

Our corporate makeup:

WorldFish Center is an autonomous, nongovernment, nonprofit organization, established as an international center in 1977. The Center is an operational entity with programs funded by grants from private foundations and governments.

WorldFish Center is governed by an International Board of Trustees and its policies are implemented by the Director General.



WorldFish Center is one of the 16 international research centers of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) that has initiated the public awareness campaign, Future Harvest.

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