

## Frequently asked questions

Q: *What aspect is most important to prepare before the actual harvesting of fish?*

A: It is important to be mindful of the harvested fish as a product and to remember its market value when preparing for this stage of the operation. You must be organized as to what is going to happen with the catch. Newly harvested fish spoil quickly, and months of investment in time, money and labour can be wasted if they do not arrive at the market in excellent condition. It is important therefore to have all collecting gear and procedures well-prepared and thought-out beforehand.

Q: *What size should fish be harvested at?*

A: This aspect depends on the market that you have targeted in your operational plan. If the market is prepared to accept smaller fish, this will make harvesting and handling easier. Rural markets tend to accept fish at smaller sizes (150-300 g) while urban markets often prefer fish that can be filleted (350-500 g).

Q: *What does harvesting involve?*

A: In a nutshell, harvesting involves the entire or partial collection of the fish from the water-body, be it a dam, pond, tank, cage or raceway. Harvesting will require specific equipment (such as nets and portable tanks, trays, etc.) to be readily at hand.

Q: *Does one harvest the entire crop of fish?*

A: You can decide to harvest all the fish at one time only if you are able to handle the logistical possibilities for delivering the harvested catch to the market in good condition. If fish are to be harvested live, then adequate holding facilities need to be prepared in advance. You may also wish to separate the broodstock from the harvested fish so that you ensure continuation of your aquacultural activities.

Q: *What equipment is required for harvesting?*

A: Harvesting is impossible with equipment that is in poor condition, such as nets with holes in them, insufficient buckets or holding containers for the catch, etc. All equipment must be prepared well before, as the fish will be stressed by activities such as emptying the water or by handling or netting. A valuable exercise may be to have a 'mock run' with your staff before harvesting to check that you have all the necessary equipment.

Q: *How long does harvesting take?*

A: Always longer than you think! Even the draining of a small 0.25-ha pond can take several hours. It is advisable to start draining the pond beforehand to allow more time to catch, clean, and package the fish the following day, and to get them to market that same day. This will ensure that the catch is fresh and that a better product is delivered. It is often better to harvest only partially, especially if time is limited. It is important to ensure that the remainder of the fish (those not harvested) have suitable living conditions (e.g. adequate oxygen, clean water, adequate space to prevent physical damage) to enable them to survive in good conditions until another harvest.

