

Frequently asked questions

Q: *Can I grow tilapia on the Highveld?*

A: In summer all parts of South Africa are suitable for growing tilapia if the water is over 20°C. However, winter water temperatures that fall below 13°C will kill farmed tilapia, and they will not grow well at temperatures below 18°C. Thus, only a summer 'crop' can be harvested on the Highveld. The use of hot-house tunnels make tilapia farming more geographically widespread, however.

Q: *Where can I grow trout in South Africa?*

A: Trout need abundant cool running water to thrive, thus the higher, well-water regions of the Mpumalanga escarpment, KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg mountains, Eastern Cape Amatola and Drakensberg highlands, and the upland regions of the Western Cape are the best regions for trout. Other more localized regions suitable for trout are the Magaliesberg hills in Gauteng and parts of the southern Cape.

Q: *Are barbel *Clarias gariepinus* really an attractive aquaculture species?*

A: Yes, and no. They have good culture potential in that the techniques have been well documented, but market acceptance still remains a challenge. Be cautious of this species at present until potential markets become more reliable.

Q: *Is ornamental fish culture highly specialized and complicated?*

A: No, if this was the case how is it that in the far East thousands of rural farmers make a living from it? Ornamental fish culture can be done in simple small earth ponds, in the warmer parts of the country. Coldwater ornamental fish (goldfish and koi) can be cultured almost anywhere in South Africa.

Q: *How can I get into ornamental fish culture?*

A: It is the marketing that has to be well-organised and the cooperative approach works best. Ornamental aquaculture is well-suited to the concept of 'aquaculture zones' where numerous small-scale fish farmers pool their resources and market their product collectively to a central buyer who will help with technical advice and may even help with the harvesting and collection of the product.

Q: *What is the potential for other species?*

A: Any fish species not indigenous or present in this country has to pass a 'conservation risk assessment' with the various nature conservation departments. The protocols for this have not yet been worked out; therefore, it is unlikely that other exotic species have realistic potential at this stage.

Q: *Is the production of fingerlings for sale to others a realistic aquaculture option?*

A: If they can be proven to be of superior quality, available in sufficient quantity and at an affordable price, yes. There is a need for the production of quality fingerlings, and the aquaculture industry cannot start without this reliable source of 'seed'. There is considerable potential for the production of mono-sex tilapia, red-colour forms of tilapia and even possibly Nile tilapia and catfish fingerlings; however, this form of aquaculture is technically demanding.

