

## Frequently asked questions

Q: *Does one need lots of water for fish farming?*

A: No, the Israelis (for example) farm fish in one of the driest parts of the world. The quantity of water available determines the methods used, whereby intensive water recirculating methods tend to predominate where water is scarce, and extensive ones where water is abundant.

Q: *Do you need a university degree in zoology or ichthyology to become a successful fish farmer?*

A: No, a good practical ability is more important, although a basic understanding of and 'feel' for animal husbandry is essential. If you have no 'feel' for animals, do not become a fish farmer.

Q: *Can a farmer use his dam or water-storage tanks for aquaculture?*

A: Generally, no, in that these tend to be either unmanageable because they cannot be drained and the stock managed, or too small in that the feed needed to grow a worthwhile number of fish would soon pollute the small water volume of the storage tanks without filtration. However, dams can be wellused for cage-type aquaculture (see Chapter 4).

Q: *Is aquaculture a fulltime occupation or an alternative to other farming practices?*

A: It can be either, depending on its scale. Some fish farmers are also crop or other livestock farmers, while others are fully occupied managing their fish farms which leaves no time for other occupations.

Q: *Is fish farming profitable?*

A: Fish farming is a business just like any other, and the growing of the fish is only one aspect, just like the growing of crops is only one aspect of traditional farming. The farmer also needs to be competent at harvesting, processing and selling the harvest, and in running the other essential aspects of a business, such as the keeping of records, maintenance of machinery and equipment, managing staff, and marketing the product. It is only if he/she is successful at doing or delegating all these functions will the business be profitable.

Q: *If I have no money, can I start fish farming?*

A: Clearly, if you want to start your own operation of any type, you need some sort of start-up capital, otherwise you should gain experience on someone else's fish farm first. A small-scale operation can develop into a viable business if carefully designed. For example, some of the Far East family-run fish farms are very small and only grow one species of fish in a few simple ponds. If you are prepared to cooperate with others doing likewise, and pool your resources, you may well succeed in creating a good business. Your expectations must be realistic though, and you will not become an exporter of fish from just half a dozen ponds.

Q: *What expertise do I need to undertake my own fish farming venture?*

A: A spirit of hard work coupled with preparedness to undertake more than just fish farming itself. If you are going to call a mechanic every time your vehicle needs an oil change, or an electrician when you need to wire up a pump, rather go and become a desk-bound civil servant, as fish farming demands that one be a master at many trades. Be prepared to try to learn how plumbing works, dams are built, fish breed, and don't depend on others to fix the daily problems associated with the lifestyle of a fish farmer. Like agriculture, it is generally an outdoor, healthy and exciting lifestyle that can lead to some frustration at times, but much work satisfaction and rewards as well. You will never be bored!

