Frequently asked questions

Q: *Can I breed tilapia (O. mossambicus) in a pond?*
A: Yes, but you will have little control over production, and collection of the fry will be difficult as you will not be able to separate the fry from the adults if you drain the pond, and many will likely be lost in the mud. Netting juvenile tilapia from the pond margins is more difficult than it looks as they soon flee to deeper water as they perceive you to be a predator and their natural instincts compel them to flee. Pond-breeding is very much a second-best option. If a shallow-end can be closed off from the main pond, this helps in collecting fry.

Q: *Will barbel (C. gariepinus) breed naturally in ponds, and will I get lots of fingerlings from them?*
A: Barbel will sometimes spawn wild in ponds, but production will be very low and most will be lost to predators and cannibalism. Cultured barbel need to be spawned artificially.

Q: *Can I mix the juveniles of tilapia, carp and barbel together in a pond?*
A: Yes, to some extent this is polyculture and their slightly different feeding habits can give a higher overall production from the pond (in theory). However, barbel tend to produce 'shoots' which rapidly outgrow the others, and cannibalism may cause heavy losses of the tilapia and carp juveniles.

Q: *Will trout breed naturally in dams or tanks?*
A: No, in South Africa, only rare wild populations of trout, in certain rivers where environmental conditions are perfect, breed naturally. Most farmed trout are stripped and then artificially reared from the fertilized egg stage.

Q: *How many fingerlings can I get from one spawning?*
A: A mouth-brooding *O. mossambicus* of around 500 g may spawn up to 500 eggs, a substrate-spawning *Tilapia rendalli* may produce up to 3000 fry. Barbel and carp can produce several hundred thousand fry per spawning from a 3-4 kg female. Trout may produce around 500-1000 eggs per 2-kg female.