Abstract

Combining agriculture initiatives and income generation or wealth creation has been a major challenge in the African continent. The overall aim of Kenya, under the Vision 2030 Economic Pillar, is to promote economic growth through the value chain approach. The Government recognizes that the fisheries sector plays a key role in the national economy especially on food security, poverty reduction and employment creation. Increased demand for fish and increased fishing pressure has compelled the government to prioritize aquaculture as a platform for economic growth. Especially around Lake Victoria aquaculture can relieve the pressure of capture fisheries. In order to realize the potential of aquaculture to the country, the Government of Kenya under the Economic Stimulus Program (ESP), invested US$ 85 Million in small-scale fish farming in 2009/2011. As a consequence, Aquaculture production increased from 4,220 to 19,337 MT (from 2007 to 2011) whereas Kenya now is the 4th largest aquaculture producer in Africa, mainly from culture of Nile tilapia (Oreochromis niloticus). Upon request of the Government of Kenya in 2012, a trilateral agreement was signed between the Governments of Kenya, Germany and Israel to support small-scale aquaculture in the Lake Victoria region. The aim was to enhance knowledge of fish farmers, train trainers and extension officers and establish a center of excellence in aquaculture at Ramogi Institute of Advanced Technology (RIAT) in Kisumu. As part of the program, a baseline survey conducted in the counties of the former Nyanza and Western Provinces indicate that the average area per fish farmer in the project area is 500m². 73% practice monoculture, while polyculture accounts for 27%. Manure (organic) is applied in 61% of the ponds and 60% of the ponds were green, which indicates good pond management. Over 51% of the farmers keep records, though further training is needed on record keeping and financial management. Major challenges are low adaptation of technology, quality of seed and feed, high cost of feed, access to aquaculture inputs and lack of market information.

The trilateral project has already shown positive impacts at different levels. The baseline survey identified gaps and needs of farmers, extension officers and future areas of cooperation. Through this on-going collaborative effort, aquaculture in the region will be key to improving the lives of the riparian communities who depend on fish for their livelihood and parallel reduce their dependence on the dwindling stocks from Lake Victoria.