

For Immediate Release

AquaGAP: New standard for Good Aquaculture Practices launched

(Weinfelden, January 22, 2009) **The Institute for Marketecology (IMO) is proud to announce that quality farming according to Good Aquaculture Practices can now be certified for all species raised in aquaculture systems worldwide. After many years of consultation with farmers, NGOs, government organisations and other stakeholders this standard represents a milestone in the development of good management practices for this fast growing sector. A number of farms and processors are already under assessment and the first certificate will soon be issued. A public consultation period is opened until 28th of February; the purpose is to improve the new quality standard. Please find more information at the new AquaGAP website: www.aquagap.net.**

An increasing demand for sustainable seafood is currently confronted by restricted supply and the availability of sustainable seafood from fisheries is on the decrease. It is becoming more and more important to structure the rapid growth in aquaculture and to challenge and implement good management practices.

“The AquaGAP standard and label was developed on customer request, with many retailers taking the decision to only source seafood from certified suppliers from 2009 onwards”, said Michèle Stark, Head of the Department Fisheries and Aquaculture at IMO. “Immediate action is required to bring farmers and processors, feed companies as well as hatcheries up to the standard of internationally recognized levels.”

The new certification programme opens a wide range of new possibilities for farms implementing good practices and companies wishing to confirm quality by using the new AquaGAP label on the international market.

AquaGAP assures:

- transparency of origin
- quality and food safety at each stage of production
- good aquaculture farming to maintain or improve the health of surrounding ecosystems
- principles of corporate social responsibility and commitment towards local communities
- animal welfare

The aim is to bring farming practices to an internationally recognized level and ensure consumer trust in quality seafood products. The programme is not limited to individual species or specific regions. By placing the AquaGAP label on products, quality seafood from all regions can be recognised by importers/retailers and most importantly, the final consumer.

Besides the main section on improved management practices, ensuring the good health of the surrounding environment as well as the species under production, this standard includes aspects of social accountability and food safety. A crucial part of the implementation is traceability, including all units in the chain, from the farm to the final consumer. Within the first 3 years of certification, conversion must be completed to only source quality feed containing fishmeal and fish-oil from identified sustainable sources, as well as quality larvae/fry from controlled hatcheries.

From many retailers and producers requesting certification, 10 companies are currently under assessment. All certified operations will be listed at the new AquaGAP website at www.aquagap.net.

The AquaGAP standard is open for public consultation until February 28th 2009. An evaluated summary of all comments will be listed on the AquaGAP website. Interested stakeholders and individuals are invited to actively participate in the consultation process and to contribute to the improvement of the AquaGAP certification programme by email (public-consultation@aquagap.net).

AquaGAP was developed by IMO and is owned by the non-profit Swiss Bio-Foundation ensuring the controlled production and the good quality of seafood products. IMO is one of the most experienced international agencies for inspection, certification and quality assurance of aquaculture products. The special IMO Group structure, with local offices and representatives active in more than 90 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and South America, thus allows worldwide inspection and certification services for the entire supply chain from the farm to the consumer.

New AquaGAP Label



Contact

Mrs. Claudia Winkelmann, IMO, Department Aquaculture and Fisheries

Mrs. Ines Hensler, IMO, Public Relations

Tel. +41 (0) 71 626 0 687, info@aquagap.net