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RESEARCH REPORTS

Sustainable Aquaculture for a Secure Future

Title: **Gamitana (*Colossoma macropomum*) and Paco (*Piaractus brachypomus*) culture in floating cages in the Peruvian Amazon**

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Abstract: In April 1999, the Institute for Investigations of the Peruvian Amazon (IIAP) located in Iquitos (Loreto region) with the Italian NGO Terra Nuova and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIUC), through the auspices of the PD/A CRSP-USAID program, initiated the Food Security Program for Familiar Productive Units (PROSEAL) between the Iquitos-Nauta Road and the Tigre River (Santa Helena and Huayococha). The goal of this program was to produce fish in ponds and floating cages as a way of providing tools to improve the animal protein intake of the Quichuas indigenous population and other rural poor.
This article is restricted to the experiences gained through a demonstration project on floating cages. Fish culture in cages floating directly in the natural environment in the Peruvian Amazon has not been reported previously; thus, many issues had to be resolved for it to be successful. The two predominant concerns were:1) the behavior of major predators, such as dolphins (*Inia geofroensis* and *Sotalia fluviatilis*), crocodiles (*Cayman sclerops*), and pirañas (*Serrasalmus natereri*) towards the unprotected floating cages containing large numbers of fish; and 2) the sociological fact that natives of the region possessed a strong traditional hunting and gathering tradition, with fish culture activities being alien to them.
The fishes selected for cage culture were the gamitana (*Colossoma macroponum* – also known as black cachama or tambaquí), and paco (*Piaractus brachypomus*), also known as pacú, white cachama, pirapitinga or morocoto. The two species have the advantage of being well known

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to the local population, although, recent captures have decreased dramatically as a result of excessive fishing pressure on natural stocks by the Iquitos-based commercial fishing fleet. In this article, we report preliminary results obtained from gamitana and paco culture in floating cages in the Tigre River.

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