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AQUACULTURE & FISHERIES INNOVATION LAB

## RESEARCH REPORTS

Sustainable Aquaculture for a Secure Future

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**Title:** Current situation and challenges for farming of snakehead fish (*Channa micropeltes* and *Channa striatus*) in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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**Abstract:** AquaFish will not be distributing this publication. Copies may be obtained by writing to the authors.

Fish culture in ponds and cages is very common in freshwater areas of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, where aquaculture plays a very important role in national fisheries production. The farming of giant snakehead began in the 1960s while the culture of common snakehead occurred since the mid 1990s. There are two groups of snakehead, that is, *Parachanna* and *Channa*. The *Channa* group is recorded to have 27 species and distributed in most of the Asian countries while *Parachanna* are mainly distributed in Africa, with three species, only. There are four species of Channidae in the Mekong Delta: *Channa gachua* (Ca Chanh duc), *Channa lucius* (Ca Day), *Channa striata* (Ca loc den), *Channa micropeltes* (Ca loc bong) (Khoa & Huong, 1993). However, two species - Ca loc den or Common snakehead (*C. striata*), and Ca loc bong (*C. micropeltes*) - are the main species of snakehead farmed in the delta. In Asian countries snakehead is cultured in semi-intensive or intensive systems in earthen ponds, cages, garden ditches and rice fields (Ling, 1997; Xuan et al., 1994). Long et al. (2004) estimated the production of cultured snakehead in the MKD in 2002 to be about 5,300 tonnes, mainly from An Giang, Dong Thap, Can Tho and Kien Giang provinces. Our estimated production of snakehead from the provinces in 2009 was about 30,000 tones, of which 7,500 tones was giant snakehead. All of the snakehead fish farmers surveyed in this study practiced aquaculture spontaneously at a small scale without any planning or sector management. However, the information on snakeheads is not much available (Huan, 2007) while there are many issues which need to be solved, in particular, dependence on the supply of small fish which are used for snakehead feed is an important source of animal protein for

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a significant proportion of population in the delta. It should be noted that there are three typical geographical conditions in freshwater areas of the delta by annual flood level, that is, deep flooded areas (more than 2 m depth in the peak of floods), medium flooded area (1-2 m depth), and shallow flooded area (less than 2 m depth). The wild fish stocks and fishing activities may differ in these areas.

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