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Sustainable Aquaculture for a Secure Future

Title: Diseases of Tilapia

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Abstract: Tilapias originated in Africa. They have a rapid growth rate and relatively few diseases, probably because of the nature of the environment within which they have evolved, with its regular droughts and other stresses. They have become one of the most economically important group of cultured species. Tilapia farms are widespread in the tropics and subtropics. The fish reared in ponds, cages, or pens, and they grow well in freshwater and brackishwater environments. The high fecundity of the fish, its rapid growth rate, its few disease problems, and the ready availability of tilapia fry have resulted in intensification of production. Papers of diseases of tilapia were first published early this century.

Under the original extensive or semi-intensive culture systems, tilapias were more resistant to disease than many other fish species (Roberts and Sommerville, 1982). However, the intensification of culture systems and resultant deterioration in the environment have been associated with an increase in parasitic and infectious disease problems.

Formerly, parasitic diseases appeared to be more significant than other forms of infection, but the incidence of nonparasitic infections appears to be increasing. Consequently, although the literature on infectious diseases of tilapia is increasing rapidly, there has only been a slight increase in the reports of parasitic problems (Vega, 1988).

This chapter reviews the work on diseases of both wild and cultured tilapias.

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