

# Socioeconomic Aspects of Shrimp Farming in Thailand

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LINKAGES in the shrimp farming industry in Thailand occur between the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, the main groups are the shrimp farms and the local community. At the macro level, the groups are the shrimp industry, national bodies and international bodies. A study of the linkages between groups at these levels indicates that there are three central socioeconomic issues in shrimp farming in Thailand.

Firstly, socioeconomic problems are caused by 'shifting aquaculture', a term that describes the movement of farming operations to new areas as old areas become unproductive. The obvious direct outcome is abandonment of farms. The main problems caused by shifting aquaculture are environmental degradation and the perpetuation of economic 'boom-bust' cycles. Possible solutions may be the encouragement of contract farming, cooperatives, co-management and community-based management. The researchable issues are (a) the study of factors affecting success and failure of each structure and (b) comparative studies of each structure.

The second socioeconomic issue is the conflict between shrimp farming activities and other activities. The problems are resource use conflicts, resource allocation problems, externality effects and social conflicts. Possible solutions may be internalisation of environmental costs and reductions in government subsidies for shrimp farming. The researchable issues are (a) economic valuation of natural resources and environment and (b) 'green' benefit-cost analysis.

The third socioeconomic issue relates to Government involvement, including laws and regulations which affect shrimp farming. Problems occur because many agencies are involved, there are enforcement problems, and there are unintended impacts of multiplicity of agencies governing resource uses. The solutions would require a holistic approach to the planning process, and a review of laws and regulations. The researchable issues are (a) institutional analysis and (b) policy analysis.

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