



PAUL DICKENSON

Fishing for information

The expanding global aquaculture industry offers a significant economic opportunity for many people in developing countries, but progress is often hampered by a lack of useful information, reports Rebecca Thyer

PARTNER COUNTRIES: Global **PROJECT:** FIS/2002/036: Development of the Aquaculture Compendium **DESCRIPTION:** Compiling useful information on aquaculture into a single resource **CONTACT:** Elizabeth Dodsworth, CABI, e.dodsworth@cabi.org

Aquaculture is one of the world's fastest-growing primary industries, especially in Asia, where more than 90 per cent of aquaculture production now takes place. Most of the growth is also happening in this region. However, the full potential of this increasingly important industry is often hampered by a lack of relevant, localised information. Many farmers also have difficulty accessing what information does exist, so providing people with available knowledge has been the focus of a recently completed ACIAR-funded project.

The project team, from the UK-based not-for-profit publisher CABI, compiled an *Aquaculture Compendium* based on its own innovative technology for knowledge management.

Essentially a search-based multimedia encyclopaedia, the compendium contains text, pictures, maps, databases, bibliographic data, diagnostic keys, taxonomic information and statistics, and is available on CD-ROM or via the internet – making it primarily a tool for extension officers and researchers.

CABI was approached by aid organisations in

Australia and Asia to carry out the project, based on its well-known role in compiling information, particularly for researchers.

Project team member Dr Elizabeth Dodsworth, CABI's information for development director, says a lot of important information already existed: "Our job was to bring it all together and identify any gaps." The team commissioned material to fill those gaps and sought permission to reproduce existing material.

Dr Dodsworth says the information is intended for extension officers, practitioners and small business owners. Through their work it will be passed on to rural workers.

"Aquaculture has great potential to improve socioeconomic conditions and environmental sustainability worldwide. The compendium will help address information needs and ultimately contribute to improving the sustainable livelihoods of people dependent on aquatic resources."

Dr Martin Parr, who managed the *Aquaculture Compendium* editorial process, says a more comprehensive approach was taken to this work than

for CABI's earlier compendium projects. "We took a different approach to this work. In addition to including pre-published information and numerous commissioned datasheets, we also commissioned a series of case studies with links to the R&D behind this work from institutions in Bangladesh, Vietnam and Thailand. We basically documented local practices and provided links to more information."

He says information was presented in this way to ensure maximum use of the material available.

"By providing relevant and interesting case studies, those working in aquaculture can immediately relate to problems or issues they might be facing," Dr Parr says.

Support for the newly released compendium has so far been very positive. Dr Dodsworth says it shows a big shift in developing countries towards aquaculture.

The compendium is available for purchase and will also be distributed through project partners, including ACIAR.

For more information: www.cabicompendium.org/ac