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FAO emphasizes on Asia Pacific aquaculture sustainably with innovation

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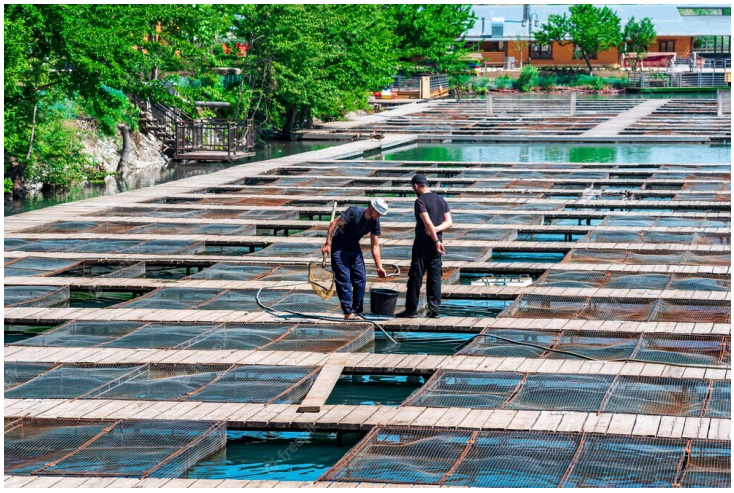

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Asia accounts for more than 90 percent of global aquatic animal production. 126 million tonnes of live weight aquaculture production, including aquatic animals and algae, were produced in 2021, about half of which were farmed finfish. There was an estimated farmgate value of $296.5 billion for the output. In contrary, Americas, Europe and Africa combined account for 8.2 percent. Currently, more than 700 species are cultured around the world, but just 12 species account for about half of global production.

FAO emphasizes the sector now needs an updated set of governing principles that ensure it expands and intensifies, embracing modern technologies, while being environmentally and socially responsible, economically viable, and meeting the needs of present and future generations in a sustainable manner.

In a recent development, FAO emphasized critical themes for aquaculture, including production methods, social issues and planetary health, nutrition, genetic resources, biosecurity, governance, and inclusive market access.

Identifying the concerns, FAO shared certain recommendations to trigger sustainable aquaculture are;

- In the future, aquaculture should be climate smart, while we use the ocean to supply food more effectively, efficiently, and intelligently. A key aspect of this will be to emphasize integrated growth in low trophic level culture species (such as seaweed and filter-feeding bivalve molluscs and finfish).

- Africa, Latin America, and Small Island Developing States must be encouraged to develop aquaculture, which is predominantly practiced in Asia.Â
- The use of marine-sourced ingredients has decreased and feed efficiency has improved, but more innovation is needed, especially for many species being farmed in developing countries.
- In contrast to terrestrial agriculture, selective breeding programmes to develop more efficient farmed types of aquatic species are heavily underutilized, currently accounting for only around 15 percent of production.
- Biosecurity should be enhanced and take a more proactive approach through improved disease-alerting systems, integrated data and regulatory frameworks that reduce the risk of the spread of aquatic epidemic diseases.
- Digital and electronic technologies can be harnessed to improve food safety concerns and certification protocols, such as traceability system, e-commerce, as well as broadening market access.
- There is a need for many countries to develop and implement supportive, dedicated legislation, through a lead agency, to coordinate regulations that promote sustainable development whilst ensuring public well-being without overly constraining aquaculture systems' capacity to cope with environmental and social challenges.
- Having become a major food and economic industry, aquaculture now needs to take on a proactive role in integrating social responsibility and well-being perspectives at all levels, including workers.
- Sustainability and decent work standards certification are downstream demands, yet the burden of compliance falls disproportionately on producers, especially small-scale aquaculture operators. Mechanisms to redistribute costs and benefits equitably between producers and retailers should be sought and implemented.