

# Preparedness and response to aquatic disease emergencies: the relevance and role of the private sector

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## ABSTRACT

The private sector is often the most seriously impacted in disease emergencies and yet, paradoxically, is frequently overlooked in the planning and development of contingency plans and responses to aquatic disease emergencies. While it is true that some disease problems can be self-inflicted, this is most often due to lack of an adequate knowledge or appreciation of the disease risks associated with a particular activity. This is exacerbated by the multi-functional structure of the private sector, where different stakeholders may have drastically different motivations and attitudes to risk. Preparation of contingency plans and disease responses without adequate consideration and communication with the different private-sector stakeholders will usually result in severe problems in their implementation. This paper looks at the structure and role of the various private-sector stakeholders in the aquaculture industry and uses two shrimp disease case studies – yellowhead and white spot diseases in Thailand and “loose shell syndrome” in India – to illustrate how the public and private sectors can effectively collaborate in a structured approach to aquatic animal disease emergencies.

## INTRODUCTION

Most aquaculture activities in Asia, and around the world, are conducted by the private (i.e. non-governmental) sector. These range in size and complexity from the growth of trapped fish in small ponds for household or local consumption to large conglomerates breeding and growing expensive seafood items for export, and everything in between. Governments, in general, tend to play a facilitating role (through technology transfer and extension), a regulatory role or some combination of the two. There is also a tendency of governments in Asia to adopt a largely “laissez faire” attitude, either due to the importance of private-sector aquaculture in local and national economies (including as a source of food security), or as a result of a lack of sufficient resources to manage private-sector aquaculture activities. Only recently have some governments

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