Carousel Abstracts

Perceptions of Fisheries Officers and their Educational Needs Regarding Sustainable Aquaculture

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Fisheries, including aquaculture, provide a vital source of food, employment, recreation, trade and economic well being for people throughout the world, both for the present and future generations and should therefore be conducted in a responsible manner (FAO, 1995). As the fastest growing food production sector in the world, modern aquaculture is maturing, with its emphasis shifting from the development of production technologies to assurance of longer term economic and environmental ability. Therefore, there is a growing public interest in aquaculture sustainability and aquatic source conservation. This growing public concern implies the need for focusing fisheries programs on sustainable aquaculture (SA). Fisheries Officers (FO) in various sectors of aquaculture are the first line of manpower of aquatic productions, must be the guide and executive of manpower to observe SA procedures, principles and regulations. However, the question is whether FO has been prepared to carry out these tasks for their stakeholders or have the positive perceptions regarding SA.

Purpose
The main purpose of this study was to assess the FO’s perception and their educational needs in respect to SA and determines its relation with the FO’s professional characteristics; and ascertain how much of the variance FO’s perception could be explained by independent variables of the study.

Methods
This study used a descriptive and correlational survey method and the FO of 28 provincial departments of aquaculture in Iran (N=550) made up the population of the study. Two hundred twenty six (n=226) were randomly selected. Likert-type scales were used to measure perceptions related to knowledge level of sustainable aquaculture. Collective of aquaculture experts in the central department did content validity of the questionnaire and needed modifications were made. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the questionnaires for this study; also a response rate of 87% was attained.

Results
The result of the study indicated that the term of SA as a concept was somewhat ambiguous to many FO. Besides, the respondents had positive perception regarding SA. These positive perceptions vary with the respondent’s age, gender, and level of education and work experience. The findings imply the necessity to focus on training in-service programs on SA.

Educational Importance
The results of this research could help the fishery Organization to develop and deliver educational programs based on the FO’s educational needs. Information gathered will help management to provide a more realistic in-service training, and also to create opportunities for FO to be more productive as educators.