



ISU FISHERIES EXTENSION

Managing Iowa Fisheries

Is Fish Farming For You?

Introduction

Fish farming, also known as aquaculture, has attracted the attention of farmers, landowners, and investors as an alternative agriculture enterprise in Iowa. Like other forms of farming, fish farming involves capital investment, labor, management, and risks. If you are considering fish farming, this checklist may help you determine whether a fish farming enterprise is feasible. A positive response to most questions on the checklist will not guarantee success, just as a negative one will not mean automatic failure. The checklist does not cover all possibilities, but it does address the most important considerations. To have a high probability of success, most of your answers to the following questions should be yes before you begin a fish farming operation.

Production Factors

1. Are the facilities where you plan to raise fish located near your residence to allow frequent observations and necessary management adjustments?
2. Can you acquire the skills necessary for fish farming at reasonable costs of money and time?
3. Is it biologically feasible to raise the desired fish in your area?
4. Do federal, state, and local regulations allow and encourage fish farming?
5. Are good quality feeds available at a competitive price?
6. Are eggs, fry, or fingerlings available from local dealers?
7. Can you raise your own eggs, fry, or fingerlings?
8. Are you prepared to handle water quality problems?
9. Can you make or purchase aeration equipment?
10. Is the year-round water temperature suitable for the fish you want to raise?
11. Is dependable labor available?
12. Are dependable services available for disease diagnosis?
13. Do you have a source of supply for drugs and chemicals necessary to treat disease or water quality problems?

14. Do you have storage areas for feed?
15. Can you identify any government agencies or industry organizations that can provide educational and technical services?
16. Can you handle stress that may result from risk management and additional demands on your time?
17. Are you willing to devote the daily labor and management required for a fish operation?

Marketing

1. Do you know of an established market for your fish?
2. Is there a high market demand for your fish?
3. Do you know the price range and market stability of the fish?
4. Is there a market for your fish at the time of year you plan to sell them?
5. Can you be flexible and harvest fish during the off-season?
6. Do you have a suitable arrangement for harvesting fish?
7. Do you have an alternative marketing strategy if the established market is not available?
8. Can you transport your fish to the market point?
9. Could a cooperative be formed in your area to help market the fish?
10. Are you able to clean and dress your fish for market?
11. Are there other facilities that will clean and dress your fish for market if you are not able to do it yourself?
12. Is there a market for eggs, fry, or fingerlings?

Economics

1. Do you have suitable ponds or a site suitable for ponds?
2. Is water available to fill the ponds and replace losses due to evaporation, leakage, or other problems?
3. Is the water of proper quality and quantity for fish production?
4. Is the topography and soil suitable for a fish farm operation?
5. What are the costs of pumping water for your operation?

