

MY EXPERIENCE AS AN AQUACULTURE RESEARCH INTERN
AT THE DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES IN ZAMBIA

By

Mulako Kabisa

INTRODUCTION

My name is Mulako Kabisa and I am a Biological Sciences graduate from the University of Zambia having majored in Ecology. I took part in an internship program at the Department of Fisheries under the then Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development during the period of 1st to 22nd July, 2011. I was stationed at the National Aquaculture Research and Development Centre (NARDC) in Kitwe which is in the Copperbelt Province at the Mwekera Aquaculture Research Station. Mwekera is a rural area within the Copperbelt that is within the reserve of the Forestry Department. As is the case with Aquaculture Research Stations within the country, it is quite isolated and the surrounding community is rural in nature. So taking part in this type of program requires mental preparation to be away from town and stay in a rural setting.

As an Ecologist, Aquaculture Research, fish biology and water chemistry have always been of interest to me and actively taking part in this internship opened up my mind to the numerous options and possibilities with regards to career progression where future studies are concerned.

ACTIVITIES DONE

I was warmly welcomed by all the members of staff at NARDC particularly Mr. Kefi the Principle Aquaculture Research Officer (PARO) there and Mrs. Ngupeni the Aquaculture Research Officer (ARO).

I took part in various aspects of Aquaculture Research:

- I actively took part in the sampling and stocking of fish into the various ponds within the fish farm. This included measuring the length and weight of the fish as well as estimating fish sizes required for ponds that were being stocked
- I learnt how to make fish feed using various components e. g Soy meal, protein, vegetable oil etc. Also, I learnt manual as well as mechanical pellet production and how to dry and store the feed.
- I did data entry for the farm. This was done via spreadsheets and it was from this data that I made calculations that showed trends in fish growth, amount of feed to be administered to various ponds according to fish weight as well as using this information to keep track of the condition of the fish.
- I read intensively on aquaculture techniques employed to ensure the success of a fish farm from the literature that was provided by the members of staff as well as going through the technical reports.
- I also worked in the Biological and Chemical laboratory carrying out water quality parameters on samples from various ponds within the station as well as helping out on on-going research e. g counting and measuring length and width of fish eggs from previously collected samples
- I also took part exhibiting at services provided and advising prospective fish farmers on proper channels to follow at the Copperbelt Trade Fare.

CONCLUSION

My time as an intern at NARDC was a very enlightening experience and I learnt more than I could ever imagine in such a short period of time. It gave me proper insight on what the basis of Aquaculture truly is on the ground and the work required to ensure everything runs smoothly.

As an intern, I was in a unique position to take part in all the activities within the farm as a way of getting a well rounded view of the processes required in aquaculture as well as get hands-on experience that I would otherwise never have gotten the chance to do anywhere else.

This internship gave me work experience that is difficult to come by here as well as truly set me off on my path to having better direction on which aspect of Ecology I would want to venture into.

To conclude my entire experience, all I can say is that it was a wonderful and required hard work but it was well worth it. I came back with a new found respect for work as a Researcher and as a Biologist. I would encourage everyone to take advantage of such an opportunity if it presents itself because it renews the passion that led you into the field of Biology as well as get new found respect for the work and dedication that goes into Aquaculture Research.

Regards,

Mulako Kabisa

23rd November, 2011