

## Refocus Action-Research in Fish Farming on the Challenges of Developing Merchant Family Fish Farming

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### Abstract

The NGO APDRA was built around the question of which fish farming system can meet the needs and interests of farmers in humid tropical West Africa. This initially erratic process has gradually been shaped into an approach to promoting fish farming that is based largely on the principles of the participatory action research: a facilitator provides knowledge and fosters exchanges through groups of volunteer candidates and provides in situ training, in order to give them the elements of choice to gradually plan the type of infrastructure they wish to set up and the way in which the breeding cycle will be managed.

The network of innovative fish farmers is an active catalyst for the social structure and contributes to the establishment of an environment conducive to the development of the activity. These approaches have contributed to the emergence of solid dynamics, some of which are now emerging spontaneously. This basic approach has supported many other action research processes to improve or expand the dissemination areas of the selected and practiced forms of family fish farming. Unlike most of the proposed R&D approaches, some of which have produced remarkable results, the approach proposed by APDRA is first oriented towards ownership and reproduction by the farmer and then, beyond exploitation, by the social and economic dimension given to the activity.

In those systems in constant evolution, issues (including scientific ones) are concerning infrastructure techniques or breeding management as well as market, and need to be resolved to support the development of fish farming, which offer one of the greatest potential for agro-ecological production and intensification.

**Keywords:** Merchant family fish farming, action-research, farmer innovation network