

## Samoa villagers celebrate first fish harvest from tilapia floating-cage aquaculture system

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*The first ever harvest of cage-cultured tilapia fish in Samoa took place on 25 August 2016, from a floating-cage culture system that is being trialled at Lake Satoalepai in Savaii. The fish were raised with daily feeding and care by the Satoalepai Village fish farm committee that is led by mayor Matai'a Kereta, under the guidance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries staff who work in collaboration with the Aquaculture Section of the Pacific Community (SPC).*

The tilapia harvest event was attended by Samoa's Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Hon. La'aulialemalietoa Leuatea Schmidt, several Members of Parliament, ACEO Fisheries Division Magele Etuati Ropeti, and other dignitaries. The village of Satoalepai showed its appreciation in a Samoan traditional way or *faa-Samoa* in the presentation of fine mats (*ietoga*), kava (*'ava*) and food to the Minister and other guests. Fish from the harvest were distributed throughout the village, with a portion distributed to other ministers of Samoa's Cabinet in Apia so they could also experience the taste of cage-cultured tilapia.

The harvested tilapia also featured in a lunch that was served after the harvest ceremony. Comments about the eating qualities of these lake-cultured fish were very complimentary. This can be attributed in part to the clear and slightly brackish waters of Lake Satoalepai. Another factor is the use of formulated fish-feed pellets imported from Fiji. This appears to have improved their fatness and taste, compared with other tilapia fish stocks in Samoa, which are mainly raised in ponds or cement tanks using locally grown vegetable leaves such as cassava and *pele* as feed.

The sheer quantity of fish from the trial also made a big impression. From two 3 x 3 m floating cages, and one 3 x 3 m hapa net attached to stakes,<sup>2</sup> the first culture cycle of this project delivered about 1800 fish. This produced a total of 380 kg of tilapia, which represents an average weight of 210 g each (but ranging in sizes up to 500 g) and an 80 per cent survival rate of the fingerlings that were initially stocked. Along this stretch of coast in Samoa, it is only on rare occasions that people see 1800 fish being landed in the same place at the same time.

The trial is part of a four-year project on improving community-based aquaculture in Samoa, which is funded by the Australian Government through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). This is in response to the Samoa Fisheries Division's current

Aquaculture Management and Development Plan 2013–2018, which has accorded priority to tilapia aquaculture for food security and livelihood development due to the increasing demand for this fish in the local markets including hotels and restaurants.



Fish were apportioned and placed into baskets for each household in Satoalepai village (image: Tim Pickering).

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<sup>2</sup> See article in issue #148 of this Newsletter:

[http://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/FAME/InfoBull/FishNews/148/FishNews148\\_06\\_Bermudes.pdf](http://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/FAME/InfoBull/FishNews/148/FishNews148_06_Bermudes.pdf)