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Is aquaculture for you?

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OHSU-FS-039

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1986. Revised 1991.

This publication is produced
by the Ohio Sea Grant Col-
lege Program (projects M/P-
2 and A/EP-1 under grant
NA90AA-D-SG496) and printed
by the Piketon Research and
Extension Center.

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Extension Center's aquacul-
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ture industry in Ohio through
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Sea Grant is a national pro-
gram of university-based,
marine research, extension,
and education. Sea Grant iden-
tifies and solves problems
associated with wise use and
development of marine and
Great Lakes resources. Major
funding is from National
Sea Grant College Program
of the National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
(NOAA), Department of Com-
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Aquaculture is the farming and husbandry of aquatic animals and plants. Aquaculture methods range from extensive pond culture to intensive recirculating systems. It is much more than just stocking fish in a pond and then cashing a check. It is a very expensive and risky form of agriculture. Still, aquaculture has attracted the attention of farmers, landowners and investors as an alternative agriculture enterprise. Like other forms of farming, aquaculture involves capital investment, labor, management, and above all, risk. If you are considering aquaculture, this checklist can help you determine whether an aquaculture enterprise is feasible for your particular situation. This checklist does not cover all

possibilities, of course. Answering "yes" to most of the questions won't guarantee success, just as answering "no" won't mean automatic failure. The checklist does address the most important considerations. Steps to a successful aquaculture operation include: reading and studying publications, journals, and books; attending meetings and seminars; joining and participating in the Ohio Aquaculture Association; talking with other aquaculture farmers and extension agents; preparing a business plan; and finally, testing your aquaculture plans on a small scale before investing large amounts of capital and labor. Ultimately, **YOU** decide if aquaculture is for you!

Yes	No	Marketing
_____	_____	1. Have you assessed the existing market in terms of species, market size and seasonal demand, potential customers/competition, and wholesale/retail price?
_____	_____	2. In what form will you market your product (alive, dressed, fillets)?
_____	_____	3. Do you have the equipment and personnel to harvest, handle, hold, and transport your product?
_____	_____	4. Are you familiar with the legal requirements to market your product?
_____	_____	5. Do you have an alternative marketing strategy to fall back on?
Economics		
_____	_____	1. Have you developed a realistic, written business plan with monthly objectives and projected cash flow for the first year?
_____	_____	2. Do you have a realistic, written business plan for each of the next three to five years?
_____	_____	3. Do you own or have access to property needed for the proposed aquacultural project?
_____	_____	4. Have you determined cost for construction or improvements to the site?
_____	_____	5. Do you own or have access to the necessary equipment, such as nets, pumps, feeders, graders, live-haul tanks, etc?
_____	_____	6. Do you have the necessary financial resources?
_____	_____	7. Can you secure the capital for start up and operation at reasonable cost?
_____	_____	8. Will your lender accommodate your production/marketing cycle (which differs from traditional row crops)?
_____	_____	9. Is the profit potential for aquaculture higher than that of other possible investments?
_____	_____	10. Can you afford to wait 6 to 18 months for income until your first crop attains marketable size and can be sold?
_____	_____	11. Are you willing to devote the daily time and effort required?
_____	_____	12. Do you have an adequate cash reserve for unanticipated costs, such as equipment failure, system modification, and crop loss?

- | Yes | No | Personal |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Are you willing to work long, hard, and irregular hours (16 hour days, 7 days per week)? |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Are you comfortable with mathematical problem solving, economics/accounting, and marketing? |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Are you willing to seek help when you need it? |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Do you have the technical expertise? |
| _____ | _____ | 5. If not, can you afford to hire it? |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Do you know others in the business who will provide help and advice? |
| _____ | _____ | 7. Do you belong to the Ohio Aquaculture Association? |
| _____ | _____ | 8. Do you subscribe to and read aquacultural periodicals? |
| _____ | _____ | 9. Are you willing to attend short courses in aquaculture, or attend workshops to learn about current practices and new developments? |
| _____ | _____ | 10. Will your family support your decision? |

Site and design

- | | | |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Can the proposed site be made suitable for aquaculture production with an acceptable amount of investment? |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Is the site sufficiently large for expansion if desired in the future? |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Do you live close enough to the culture site to visit and monitor as needed and insure security? |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Is an adequate supply of high-quality water available and suitable for aquaculture production? |
| _____ | _____ | 5. Can you effectively manage the waste produced by your operation? |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Is an economical and dependable source of utilities available (gas, electric, and phone)? |

Legal constraints

- | | | |
|-------|-------|--|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Will your neighbors or other affected groups accept the aquaculture operation? |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Have you discussed your planned operation with the appropriate state agencies (DNR, EPA, etc) and your local Cooperative Extension Agent? |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Have you identified the permits required to construct and operate an aquacultural operation? |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Can the required permits be obtained without excessive investment in time, money, and effort? |

Production

- | | | |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Have you determined what species you want to cultivate, and are there established culture techniques? |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Have you explored the different production technologies available and identified one that meets your abilities and resources? |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Are there dependable sources of fingerlings, or do you have the resources to maintain and spawn adults, incubate eggs, and rear juveniles? |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Are feed and other essential supplies readily available at reasonable prices? |
| _____ | _____ | 5. Are back up systems available? |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Are disease diagnostic services and dependable technical assistance readily available? |
| _____ | _____ | 7. Is trained, experienced, and dependable labor available? |

This fact sheet was adapted from *Catfish farming: Is it for you?* by John Jensen and Jerry R. Crews, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service.

For a list of aquaculture organizations, publications, and resources, request Ohio Sea Grant fact sheet #051 from either of the following:
 NATIONAL SEA GRANT DEPOSITORY
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