



THE RIO NEGRO FISHERY IS A PRIME FACTOR IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN THE REGION AND, THUS, IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF THE CABOCLOS. PHOTO: JOHN DAWES

'HEAVYWEIGHT' SUPPORT FOR THE AQUARIUM INDUSTRY

With so much negative activity affecting the ornamental aquatic industry at the moment, e.g. Hawaii, Fiji, India... it is heartening to report that not everything, or everybody, appears to be conspiring against it. Far from it!

The last edition of the *OFI Journal*, for instance, focussed on conservation and the industry and carried a selection of articles highlighting some of the positive effects of the industry on livelihoods, communities and natural habitats. Reports on some of the projects currently under way in several leading fish-collecting and exporting regions, from India to Indonesia and Brazil, all show where industry and conservation can, and do, work together towards a common target.

In addition, this special edition carried letters of support for the aquarium industry from three heavyweights of the conservation community. These make valuable and interesting reading. Therefore, just as I provide space in this column for

legislative and other matters that often impact negatively on the ornamental sector, I think it is only fair to give due prominence to these three gestures of support. I, thus, quote in some detail from all three letters.

Devin M. Bartley, Retired Senior Fisheries Resources Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome

"The strategic objectives of FAO are to end hunger and poverty, promote sustainable use of natural resources, support stable markets and help countries respond to natural and human induced disasters. Aquarium fisheries can be an important element in achieving these objectives. Collection and trade in aquarium fisheries can provide stable and secure livelihoods in developing countries, helping to alleviate poverty. Maintaining habitat for aquarium fisheries can also encourage the preservation of biodiversity and natural systems, thereby ensuring that productive natural resource bases (i.e., clean water and air, healthy soils) are available to sustain healthy communities.

"Since 1985 the value of the international trade in ornamental exports has increased at an average growth rate of approximately 14 percent per year. Given that developing countries account for about 63 percent of the export value, these figures demonstrate significant potential for the ornamental fish industry, when developed responsibly and sustainably, to play an even greater role in building livelihoods and addressing poverty alleviation.

"The work of groups such as *Project Piaba** in the Brazilian Amazon, the *LINI Project*** in Bali, and others that encourage sustainable growth of the aquarium fish trade are therefore critical to helping achieve the goals of FAO. *Project Piaba*, working in the Rio Negro region of Brazil, is working with local fishers to encourage best handling practices, increase incomes for fishers, and demonstrate additional benefits of a sustainable fishery, such as habitat protection and carbon storage (critical in the efforts to combat climate change). The *LINI Project* is working with fishers, governments, and local communities in Indonesia to develop and promote sustainable fisheries by increasing the health of coral reefs, improving fisheries management, and developing marine conservation areas. These local and regional efforts are essential to support, scale up, and promote to ensure the longevity and full potential of the aquarium fish industry.

"The work of the above groups and OFI can... help make the ornamental fish industry a sustainable and responsible industry now and in the future".

**Project Piaba* ('Buy a Fish, Save a Tree'): www.projectpiaba.org

***LINI* (Indonesia Nature Foundation - 'Buy a Fish, Save the Reef'): www.lini.or.id

Rosie Cooney, Chair, IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), Gland, Switzerland, CEESP (Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy)/SSC (Species Survival Commission) Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group & Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies, University of New South Wales.

"The IUCN and other global conservation organizations are seeking examples of where communities residing in regions of biological importance can meet basic livelihood needs in a sustainable way. In the case of sustainable fisheries for the aquarium trade, there are examples that go beyond meeting