



The women's blue revolution - Gender equality in Aquaculture

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The permanent rapid spread and evolution of aquaculture is called the blue revolution (KRAUSE et al., 2014). The blue revolution which brings adequacy requirements for best practices regarding environmental and social practices, sustainable business and work safety (LEE, 2015), nevertheless gender issues were not addressed. Even in small-scale, women work is frequently unrecognized, under or unpaid (WILLIAMS et al., 2010). The aquaculture industry, as well as the academic world related to this activity, has been traditionally dominated by men (ARENSBERGEN et al., 2012).

The debate on the role of women in aquaculture extends to science research in aquaculture. Most research on gender difference or inequities in capture fisheries and aquaculture in Africa and the Asia-Pacific focuses on the gender division of labor (WEERATUNGE et al., 2010). Women are victims of discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace far in excess of men, especially when they are admitted to jobs where men traditionally predominate (SOUZA, 2016).

Women are more likely than men to be unemployed in large parts of the world (ILO, 2018). Women often report finding barriers, prejudice, sexism and harassment in the labor market in aquaculture (ROSALEM; NAGATA, 2018). A recent study, interviewing men, it was found that they attributed the aquaculture activities to male subjects and with physical strength (POWER, 2008; GUERTLER, 2017). The production in aquaculture is perceived as a male activity, operating on a logic of sexual division of labor (KERGOAT, 2009). The concept of sexual division of labor explains that the work is divided and hierarchical, that is, that are specific works for men and specific works for women, and that the work done by men is socially and economically more valued. The gender roles of women in aquaculture production are mainly advocated to three ways or stages of production: fishing, processing and marketing (OLUFAYO, 2012). It is probably due to the gender stereotypes of these tasks, such as cooking and sewing, in which they are mistakenly perceived as female activities, such as fish processing and activities involving sewing and maintenance of fishing nets.

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General data show women accounted for nearly 14% of all people working in fisheries and aquaculture in primary sector (FAO, 2018). However, the data may be outdated because it is up to each country to accurately collect and provide data. When included second sector, women account for half of the workforce, mainly, when associated with the processing industry. The mainstream justification is attributed to the fact that women are considered more meticulous, but gender researchers are working to combat these clichéd explanations. The Report on the 6th Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF6) point that they are looking deeper in structural barriers that restrict women to work along the aquaculture value chain, as well as how these participation could increase until a gender equality in aquaculture.

Associations for fish-farming have been created formed only by women, who perform all stages of the production chain, including working with load lifting (ROSALEM; NAGATA, 2018). Choudhury and McDougall (2016) presented results for two case studies from Bangladesh - one in a homestead pond aquaculture production and the other in a shrimp processing factory. Looking for empowerment, they concluded that involvement in aquaculture can have empowerment impacts on women.

However, sex disaggregated data are not collected regularly, and this lack of information contributes to the invisibility of women in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors (BENNET, 2005; GAMMAGE, 2004). The latest FAO report notes that there is a slow growth in the quality and regularity of these data, although many countries still report with the category "unspecified", which makes it difficult for policy makers to formulate gender sensitive policies (FAO, 2018). There is a huge potential for the development of aquaculture related to women. Their empowerment have positive impacts on the economy as whole, on the development of aquaculture and on need catch up with the world's modern paradigms of equality. The rural areas are historically associated with conservative grounds limiting women's emancipation, ruling upon their own bodies, political participation and their productive contribution to the development. It is important to highlight that the broader agriculture has always been a central sector of the development countries' economy and, as such, it may lead to major changes in the social landscape. A necessary step to this end is to address the data collection issue and to develop well informed public policies.

Decent work and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

The UN, FAO and other internationally recognized institutions are deeply concerned about the insertion and promotion of equality for women and girls. The objective is to achieve gender equality in sustainable agricultural production and rural development for the elimination of hunger and poverty (FAO, 2013). One of the targets of FAO's programmes for sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture for 2013 is "women's empowerment". Women's empowerment was set as an indicator for assessing the contribution of small-scale aquaculture to sustainable rural development (FAO, 2009). The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development affirmed that women have central, transformative roles in sustainable development, and that gender equality must be a priority for action in areas including economic, social and political participation and leadership (UN WOMEN, 2013). For instance, in the International Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-

Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines), FAO points, as a way to achieve gender equality the role of associative organizations, that “women should be encouraged to participate in fisheries organizations, and relevant organizational development support should be provided” (FAO, 2015). It means that women in aquaculture are expected have equal participation not only in the production chain, but also in the political organization of the activity.

By 2015, countries have had the opportunity to adopt the new sustainable development agenda. Among them, gender equality (SDG 5) and decent work for all (SDG 8) are aligned with the gender perspective. In Goal 8 (To promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), target 8.5 (By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and people with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value) addressed the importance of valuing women's work in all productive sectors.

Aquaculture is growing up faster, consequently, associations and foundations are being created to protect workers' interests. In Galicia (Spain), for example, a common job for female is shellfish gatherers, which is a natural choice within the families as the expertise is conveyed through generations and the work tools are found at low prices. However, the regularization became compulsory for the recognition of the profession, consequently, many women left aquaculture, since it was necessary to take courses and have a register with social insurance companies.

Empowering women and promoting gender equality in all social and economic activities are guarantees for the effective strengthening of economies, boosting business, improving the quality of life for women, men and children, and for sustainable development (UN WOMEN, 2013). UN Women's principles include establishing fair treatment of women and men, respecting and supporting human rights and non-discrimination; to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men working in agriculture and livestock sectors; to promote education, training and professional development for women; to promote gender equality through scientific, technical and social initiatives; to measure, to document, to support and to publish the progress of the productive sectors in promoting gender equality.

Promoting greater participation of women in aquaculture, with equal salary and opportunities in the sector, means enhancing aquaculture, providing women workers with dignity and decent work. From this gender perspective, it is imperative to begin a process of female empowerment, through studies, actions and strategies that seek equality and female participation in aquaculture. We highlight two important aspects to encourage the participation of women in aquaculture. First, it is necessary to provide them with representation in different decision-making spaces, such as governments, ministries, workers' unions, associations and events in the field. As well, it is important to train and provide professional education courses aimed at women for different aquaculture activities. The potential of having more women in aquaculture is such that one day it will certainly be called the “blue revolution of empowerment”.

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