

Executive Summary
The Sustainable Growth of Aquaculture in Africa (SWOT Analysis)
(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

Aquaculture in Africa holds immense potential for driving food security, nutrition, livelihoods, job creation, and economic growth. The continent benefits from abundant natural resources, diverse aquatic ecosystems, favorable climates, a growing youthful workforce, and supportive policy frameworks with strong political will. Established commercial technologies, such as; tilapia farming in Egypt, Uganda, and Ghana, and catfish aquaculture in Nigeria, already provide a strong foundation for expansion of aquaculture production and value chains.

However, the sector still faces significant weaknesses, particularly in aquatic animal health and biosecurity, inadequate infrastructure across the value chain, lack of quality seed and feed, limited investment and financing options, and low public awareness. In many African countries, policies on veterinary input use, disease surveillance, and traceability are either weak or absent.

Opportunities lie in closing Africa's fish supply deficit, leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), fostering intra-African trade, expanding aquaculture value chains, and adopting innovative systems such as Integrated Agri-Aquaculture Systems (IAAS), Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS), and renewable energy-powered operations. Additionally, international partnerships, indigenous species development, and youth and women engagement present major growth avenues.

Threats include biosecurity risks from uncontrolled fish movements, climate change impacts, extreme weather events, and water pollution from industrial, agricultural, and urban sources.

The role of African organizations is central in addressing weaknesses and unlocking opportunities;

- The African Union (AU), through the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PFRS) and the Africa Blue Economy Strategy, provides the political and policy umbrella for sustainable aquaculture development.
- AU-IBAR leads continental coordination, including the African Fisheries Reform Mechanism (AFRM), which promotes regional policy harmonization and technical support for aquaculture and fisheries.
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs) (ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA, IGAD) have developed regional aquaculture action plans, harmonized regulations, and facilitated cross-border trade and disease surveillance.
- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) expands market opportunities by reducing barriers to intra-African trade in fish, feed, and aquaculture inputs.
- Continental laboratory networks and partnerships supported by AU-IBAR and WOAH strengthen aquatic animal health surveillance, diagnostics, and early warning systems.
- PPP and regional cooperation models already implemented include:
  1. AU-IBAR's Aquaculture Action Plan (2016–2025), which promotes public–private partnerships for aquafeed, seed production, and biosecurity.
  2. Nigeria's catfish PPP model linking private hatcheries and feed mills with government extension services.
  3. Ghana's tilapia feed and hatchery PPPs, co-developed with development partners and private investors.

4. Egypt's commercial aquaculture clusters, supported by government facilitation of water access, land allocation, and private sector investment.
5. ECOWAS Aquaculture Action Plan, which harmonizes aquaculture policies and standards across West Africa.

Way forward:

To achieve sustainable aquaculture growth and contribute to Agenda 2063, Africa needs a coordinated strategy at continental, regional, and national levels. This should include harmonized aquatic disease surveillance systems, strict biosecurity measures, contingency planning, promotion of climate-smart and resource-efficient systems, and facilitation of PPPs. African organizations—AU, AU-IBAR, RECs, AFRM, and AfCFTA—must continue leading policy harmonization, capacity development, financing facilitation, and regional market integration to transform aquaculture into a sustainable driver of the Blue Economy.



For more information:

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