

Panorama

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Editorial
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Around the World
Resources



Improving aquatic animal health and welfare worldwide



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In November 2022, the Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (MEWA) and the Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) launched AQMENET.

Members of AQMENET include the following countries bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf: Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

AQMENET is an important mechanism to support the implementation of high priority activities in the region, aligned with WOA's Aquatic Animal Health Strategy. In particular, it creates networks to support WOAH Members' Delegates and National Focal Points for Aquatic Animals in improving aquatic animal health and implementing WOAH aquatic standards.

The network aims to improve the knowledge and diagnostic capacities of Members, as well as the development of vaccines. AQMENET will also coordinate training of veterinarians and aquatic animal health professionals to better support the aquaculture industry and establish a network of laboratories for aquatic animal diseases. The network will promote information sharing and responsible and prudent antimicrobial use, and will build capacity to control antimicrobial resistance.

Aquaculture in the Middle East

Aquaculture and fish farming have long been a source of sustenance and an economic lifeline for many communities living along the coasts in the Middle East. The establishment of AQMENET recognises the growing importance of aquatic animal production in strengthening food security in the region.

With several seas surrounding the region, including the Mediterranean, the Gulf and the Red Sea, the Middle East has many sources of fresh seafood. However, total production in the region amounts to only 2.17% of the total worldwide production [1].

Among AQMENET members, the main aquaculture producers are Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Egyptian aquaculture has witnessed spectacular and rapid development over the past seven years. The increase is such that the country is now number one in Africa and number six worldwide in aquaculture production, the sector becoming an important contributor to Egypt's food security and economy.

Fish farming is a growth industry in many countries in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, with wild fish stocks declining and dependence on imported seafood rising. While attaining self-sufficiency in seafood in the Middle East makes sense, there are institutional, geographical and policy challenges to developing fish farming in these countries.

Increasing demand for aquatic animals and aquatic animal products can lead to a higher risk of disease spread with international trade in aquatic animals and their products. That is why the WOA Regional Representation for the Middle East, with the collaboration of the WOA Sub-Regional Representation of Abu Dhabi, proposed the establishment of this network to meet the needs of its Members and help them to tackle the challenges of building

sustainable aquatic animal health systems.

Network news and reports will be posted and regularly updated on the [AQMENET website](https://www.aqmenet.org/).



Dr Monique Eloit and Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen A. AlFadley, Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia © World Organisation for Animal Health

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AROUND THE WORLD

▶ WOA H ACTIONS

Improving aquaculture in the Middle East

The AQMENET solution

SUMMARY

The Aquatic Middle East Network (AQMENET) was established to assist WOA H Members in the Middle East to further develop their aquaculture industry by providing knowledge and expertise on the prevention, early detection and control of aquatic animal diseases.

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WOAH (founded as OIE) is a global organisation, working to ensure the health of animals across the world. Since 1924, we have focused on the complexities of animal health. We disseminate information on animal diseases and use science-based strategies to limit their potentially negative impact on society.

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