



2. *Type of submission: Abstract*

S. Sectoral Working Group sessions: S2 Enhancing sustainable aquaculture in freshwater ecosystems of Latin America

Is sustainability decision-making influenced by participation in online social networks? The case of the WhatsApp group "Peixe de Rondônia"

First author(s): Marcos C. Santos

Other author(s): Lívia Madureira, Carlos P. Marques

Affiliation, Country: UTAD Universidade Federal de Rondônia (UNIR), , Portugal

Contact: lmadurei@utad.pt

Aquaculture is a worldwide expanding activity which growth aims at responding to an increasing demand for fish. This paper focus on the Southern region of the Brazilian Amazonia. In the region, more than 90 thousand tons of native fish were produced in 2016, mainly in systems of confinement in excavated tanks. Aquaculture is experiencing continuous growth in the region for the last 10 years. Its expansion created several sustainability challenges, which might compromise the activity in the long run and endangered the local ecosystems sustainability. Fish growers along with other sector stakeholders are discussing solutions to overcome sustainability challenges both at the environmental and economic front. This paper analyses how effective can be multi-actors online social networks (OSN) acting as digital communities of practice. The conversations held in the WhatsApp group "Peixe de Rondônia" during a period of 15 months (from August 2016 to October 2017) by 239 actors, comprising: Input and equipment suppliers, Upstream industry and trade, fish growers (with 155 participants covering a diversity of growers in terms of its size and production system), the institutional sector, scientific community, and others, including the media and the community. The conversations held in the network were analyzed with content analysis technique. The analysis was supported by statistical analysis and lexical interpretations of lemmatization with the software Iramuteq. The results suggest that fish growers have a business view of sustainability, with a focus on aspects influencing fish productivity such as water quality, fish health and welfare, the introduction (pros and cos) of exotic species and the sector competitiveness, comprising the ecologic certification under a collective territorial brand. Hence, in spite of conflictual aspects some convergence can be found between economic and ecologic sustainability if fish growers were able to embrace the ecologic certification.

Keywords: Amazonia; Aquaculture; Content analysis; Sustainability; WhatsApp Group.