



Chile's salmon-farming industry focuses on hatcheries

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The Chilean salmon-farming industry has made heavy investment in the freshwater sector recently. The bulk of this investment is to build modern hatcheries with total or at least partial water recirculation, and to replace old facilities.

As IntraFish was told by various industry sources, this is essentially due to the need to upgrade old facilities to make the industry more productive.

Among other things, modern hatcheries aim to keep up with the production increases, and these will enable the Chilean industry to maintain its current growth of around 10 percent.

Eduardo Aguilera, vice president of aquaculture operations at MariCal Inc. and general manager of the Chilean affiliate CienciaMar, told IntraFish the companies started to invest in hatcheries with a greater production capacity two years ago, but also is focusing production on fewer freshwater hatcheries.

"The aim is to optimize resources. The hatcheries being built are more modern and allow for an increase in the production capacity. The trend is hatcheries capable of producing up to seven million smolts a year, whereas before they were producing a maximum of 150,000 smolts a year," Aguilera said.

That does not necessarily mean an explosive increase in the industry's production because companies are focusing their production on freshwater, he said.

"There are companies that previously had seven different hatcheries or even outsourced the production of fingerlings and smolts and they are now concentrating their production on one single much more modern and efficient hatchery," he said.

Various of these new hatcheries are not only designed to produce fingerlings, but also smolts. Industry sources said the general opinion is the production of smolts is safer in tanks, as these prevent the health problems caused by diseases in the open aquatic systems of lakes or estuaries.

Moreover, switching to producing in tanks is also more environmentally friendly, which benefits companies, above all now new Chilean environmental regulations that were enacted some time ago but are still being implemented, that require companies to rethink the production in lakes and estuaries.

Host of investments

The current trend is clear, as in the last two years companies have built over 10 large hatcheries spread out among Chile's regions VIII, IX, X and XI.

Based on an article published in *El Llanquihue* newspaper, Landcatch Chile has invested around \$3 million (€2.4 million) in its hatchery in the sector of Cunco (in region IX). Its goal is to produce 10 million smolts.

Likewise, Mainstream has poured money into a hatchery in the area of Villarrica (region IX), which is capable of producing 100 million ova a year.

In turn, a few years ago Multiexport invested \$3 million (€2.4 million) in its hatchery in Molco (region IX), which has a production capacity of six million fingerlings from the incubation of ova to 10-gram fingerlings.

Some time ago Los Fiordos, which belongs to the Agrosuper holding, built one of the biggest hatcheries in the world in the Peumo estuary (region IX), with the largest water recirculation in Chile, spending \$6 million (€4.9 million). These facilities can produce 20 million fingerlings and 9 million smolts.

More recently, Los Fiordos put its first group of trout into the modern recirculation hatchery of Mano Negra in region XI, which can produce 12 million trout and coho salmon smolts a year.

FrioSur and Cultivos Marinos Chiloe also invested in modernizing their freshwater sector with hatcheries located in the area of River Negro south of region X and the La Esperanza hatchery, respectively.

There are also the recently-built water recirculation hatcheries of the company Granja Marina Tornagaleones, Fjord Seafood's hatchery located in a sector close to Puerto Montt, and Salmones Antartica has a project to build a hatchery in region VIII this year.

This is in addition to the large investments made from 2004 to 2005 to build independent hatcheries that provide services to the industry. The Aquaculture Engineering Industrial Center (INACUI) was inaugurated in November 2004. This is a combined project of Indura S.A., Fundacion Chile and Cade-Idepe, a center engaged in the design and construction of water recirculation plants for salmonoid farming.

The hatchery can produce 1.5 million smolts a year and entailed an initial investment of \$3 million (€2.4 million).

The first ecological hatchery started up near the city of Puerto Montt in June 2004. It is owned by the company Eco Fish and has an incubation room for 3.6 million ova and it can obtain up to five productions a year with five- to six-gram fish.

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