

**Implementation of epidemiology into a national program for aquatic animal diseases in Brazil**

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Given the socioeconomic importance of aquatic animal production related activities and their increased investments, Brazil's Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture has established a partnership with the veterinary epidemiology research groups of the Universities of São Paulo and Brasília aiming at implementing epidemiology into a national program for aquatic animal diseases. The strengthening of the Brazilian fisheries and aquaculture production market is related to high quality and sanitary standards. Therefore the application of epidemiological concepts and tools become fundamental to the development of a sustainable production process which might guide the achievement of a world class healthy products. The range of activities of this agreement involves the proposition of a national active surveillance system; the development of specific sampling methodologies for bivalve molluscs; the design of prevalence studies for crustaceans; the assessment of import risk analysis; and the development of epidemiology courses to the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture' staff. The successful implementation of such program is expected to address the specific needs of a decision making process based on objective and scientific criteria, which is essential to any country wishing to protect their internal supply chain against the entry of existing diseases found in exporting countries. It is also relevant to structure effective control programs and surveillance systems based on quantified disease impacts, as well as to spread the use of veterinary epidemiology to aquatic animal health professionals.