



ICH LIEBE FISCH | I LOVE FISH PROJECT

NKHOTAKOTA FARMERS ON AN EDUCATIONAL VISIT



May 2019

The "Ich liebe Fisch" -project is working with communities in two districts; in Nkhotakota and Mchinji districts. In the two previous tilapia production cycles which were supported from the project with training, fingerlings and feed, fish farming clubs in Mchinji consistently outperformed their counterparts in Nkhotakota and the differences traditional economic activities in communities of the two districts are probably responsible for this. Mchinji district is located in the upland areas of Malawi, a few hundred kilometers away from the Lake and has a relatively longer history in fish farming unlike the traditionally fishing lakeshore communities in Nkhotakota where fish farming remains a relatively new concept. To shed more light on this, farmers in the communities in Nkhotakota reported that the oldest pond they have dates back to around 2004 which would put fish farming in the area 15 years old (On and off, it must be added).

The project team thus recommended special measures aiming to address the disparities in the two communities with the goal to attract community members in Nkhotakota to become more encouraged in aquaculture. Against this background, the "Ich Liebe Fisch"- Project team took farmers in Nkhotakota on a visit to the farm of Mr. Msyali in the same district. Mr. Msyali is one of the oldest and leading farmers in the district practicing integrated Agri-Aquaculture (IAA) who has also received support through the Ich Liebe Fisch Project. The training was organized for educational and motivational purposes to improve the farming operations of the farmers under the project.

Mr. Msyali welcomed a group of 27 farmers (3 from each of the 9 fish farming clubs the project has been working with) started off by giving a brief history of his farm. He said he started his farm in 1993 and ventured into fish farming in 1994 with the help of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). According to Msyali, he started fish farming to provide abundant fish and employment to his kinsmen. "When I started, people thought I was crazy. Why grow fish, a few kilometers from the lake?" Msyali recalled. "But I proved them wrong, all my fish were sold and

the demand keeps on growing now that catches from the Lake aren't as abundant as they used to be in the past. This should motivate you too", he added.

Mr. Msyali then shared his knowledge on various important aspects in fish farming including pond siting and fish husbandry practices. On pond siting, Msyali advised the farmers to choose a site with clean flowing water as this guarantees good quality water for the fish. On fish husbandry practices, Msyali taught the farmers to set a time table for feeding their fish and adhere to it. He also told the farmers that fish require much more than just maize bran in their diet and that locally found agricultural wastes and by-products such as cassava leaves are good supplements. He further emphasized the need to fertilize fish ponds with animal droppings to boost primary production. The discussion then moved to IAA where Mr. Msyali shared his knowledge in this area with the farmers. He emphasized that growing vegetables and fish together leads to nutritional diversity and resilience of the farming enterprises as the farmer can rely on the other enterprise if one fails. This was supported by the farmers from their ongoing experience with IAA under the project.



Msyali (Standing) sharing his experiences with the farmers.

Key attractions for the farmers were vegetables growing besides fish ponds using water from the ponds. A chicken house built over the ponds was also equally fascinating to the farmers. Mr. Msyali finished by urging the farmers to look at their farming operations as much more than an age-old practice for sustenance. “Learn from me. Farming, with enough commitment and hard work is a viable route out of poverty” Msyali concluded to the applause of the visiting farmers.





Apart from rearing food fish on his farm, Mr. Msyali is growing additionally a variety of fruits and vegetables. Irrigation is partially realized with pond water, to save fertilizer (IAA approach). This strategy of having a variety of crops in addition to fish increases resilience against failure in one of the type of crops or the yield in fish.