

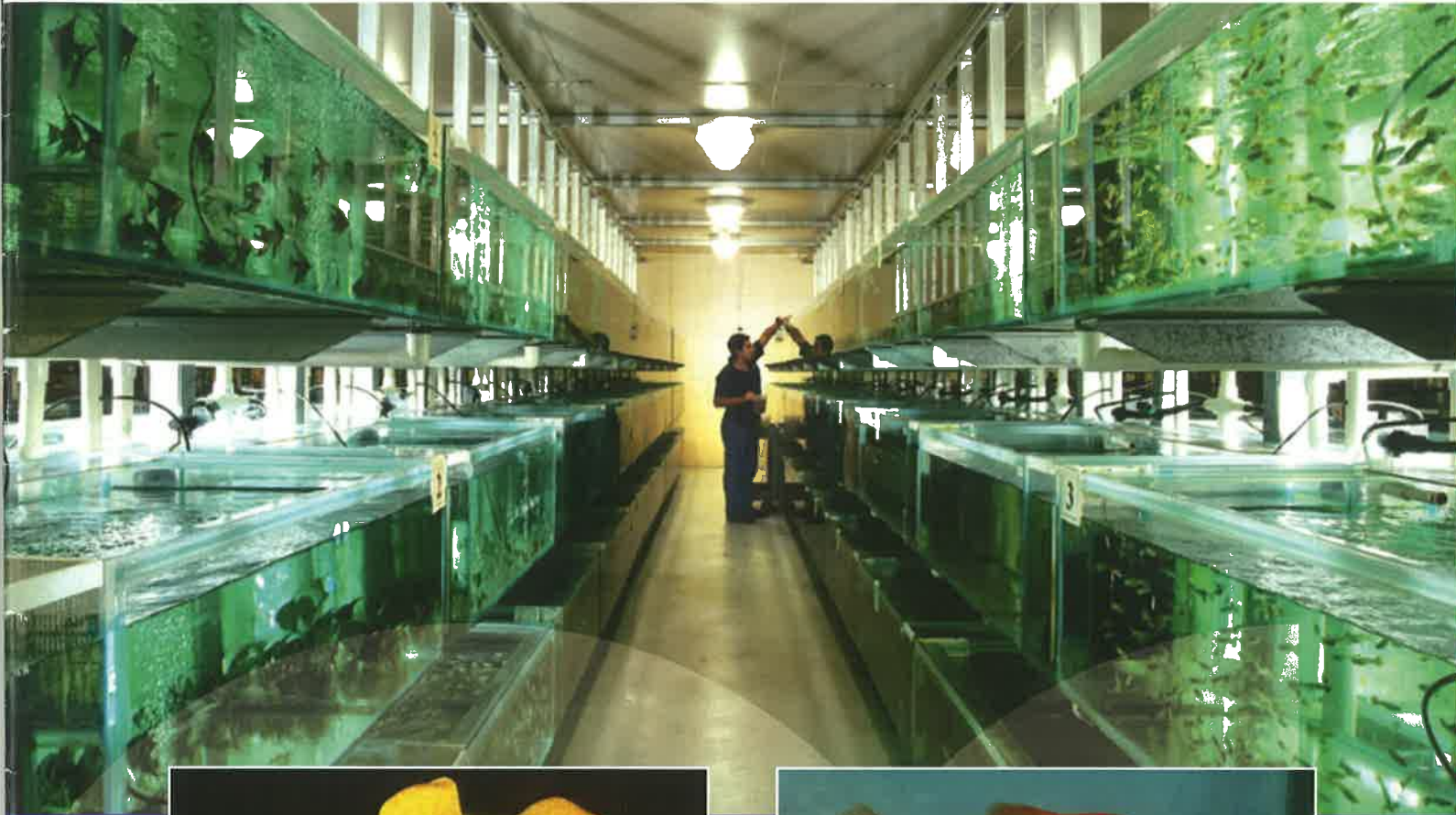
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# OFI Journal



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# President's Report

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY GERALD BASSLEER

*Our industry is still growing and changing every year. If we were to go through my President's Reports of the last seven years, it would be patently obvious that OFI is not a kind of business club anymore (as it was in the 80s). Now, more than ever before, it is involved in serving our members (and authorities) with "industrial adaptations to the demands of economics, regulations, people's opinion, etc."...and all this due to the increasing knowledge we have gathered in the life of our young (65 years?) ornamental fish industry.*

OFI has gained a great deal of attention because we are not only an association with the best traders, growers and breeders of ornamental fish, plants and invertebrates, but because we also have among our members, producers of aquarium equipment and care products, airlines, airfreight companies, governmental institutions, fish and pet trade organizations, universities, consultants, training institutes, magazines, etc. (see our free 2015 *Members' Directory*). It therefore remains important that we stay focused on the demands of the market, which might also concern emotional feelings about fish when the question is raised: "Do fish feel pain, and what do we do about it?"...yet another issue which we, as OFI, and our members have to address in the near future.

Over the past few years, we have been receiving a lot of attention from Asia because it is THE LARGEST growing market for ornamental fish, both for import and export. Therefore, in 2015, we still have our focus on Aquarama (May) and, in November, on CIPS. You will hear and read more about these in the coming *Members' Updates* and *OFI Journals*.



*Quarantine facility for marine fish at Ipiranga Peixes (Sao Paulo).*

## Sao Paulo

In January and February, I traveled to Brazil, spending five days in Sao Paulo and 17 days in Manaus and the Rio Negro. The main reason for my trip was in connection with *Project Piaba* (see the article, *Historic Rio Negro GI status for piabas*, by our editor, John Dawes, in the February *OFI Journal* No. 77).

In Sao Paulo, I organized a seminar on 19 January on the World Trade and Fish Health Management of Ornamental Fish. This was made possible with the help of Kiuslei Cassiolata (Ipiranga Peixes). There



*Mike Tucinardi (Segrest Farms) gives a presentation on the assistance that Segrest Farms can provide for Project Piaba.*

were 103 attendees, consisting of importers, pet retailers, breeders, fish magazines and press, along with Mr. Felipe Weber from the Ministry of Fisheries and Ms. Claudia Miyaki, Federal Inspector from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Brazil has a large production sector for ornamental fish for the local market, but imports are limited owing to high import taxes (40 to 60%). There is also obligatory quarantine for all imports at separate quarantine stations (one week for freshwater tropical and marine fish; two weeks for cichlids and gouramis). These stations have to be managed by a veterinarian.

Only a few importers are able to bring fish into the country because of the high costs involved; in addition, finding well-trained people remains difficult. Koi and goldfish are not allowed into Brazil owing to the risk of SVC. GMO imports are also restricted. Yet, there are 500 specialized aquarium shops in Brazil and the market is growing rapidly.



*Dr. Tim Miller-Morgan and Ian Watson searching for fish and checking water quality at Santa Isabel (AM)*



*Use of a grid screen to sort cardinal tetras by size at temporary holding station (floating 'boat') in Santa Isabel.*



*Intermediate holding facility for cardinal tetras at Barcelos (AM) which will need improvement (water quality and food) to provide better fish for the exporters.*

Brazil has a specialized fish trade organization, ABLA (Associação Brasileira de Lojas de Aquariorfilia) – something similar to OATA in the UK – which takes care of licensing, liaison with the ministries, etc. (for more details see <http://www.ablaquariorfilia.com.br/>).

#### **Manaus & Belem**

The trade in ornamental fish in Brazil is controlled by IBAMA (ecological and environmental issues, compilation of white lists, etc.), the Ministry of Fisheries (development: stimulating breeding and supporting wild-caught exports) and the Ministry of Agriculture (fish health certification, veterinary inspections).

Currently, most fish are exported from Belem, because of the larger variety that can be offered there, plus its good airline connections. Manaus used to account for 80% of the exports of cardinals and rummynose tetras, but it is/was out-competed because of its high airfreight costs, quality problems, diversity issues, competition from



*This fisherman has just netted a stingray at Daracuá.*

Colombia and Peru and competition from tank-raised fish (especially the cardinal and rummynose tetras and *Corydoras* species).

As things stand at the moment, there are 725 fish species on the Brazilian White List (IBAMA), but only 265 of these were exported in 2014. So much potential has been left swimming in the rivers and not caught by the fishermen owing to lack of information and training! *Project Piaba* should be able to address this situation and create better opportunities for the Brazilian fisher folk

#### **Rio Negro**

From 21 January to 7 February, 2015, I was invited to join the *Project Piaba* expedition to the Rio Negro. Scott Dowd (Curator New England Aquarium and Executive Director of *Project Piaba*) convinced me to attend the 'new' *Project Piaba* with participation from trainers from the NGO - *Project Piaba Brazil*, Veterinary Inspectors from the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Tim Miller-Morgan from Oregon Sea Grant





*Mari Balsan describes the renewed Project Piaba at a meeting with fishermen/women in Barcelos (AM).*

Extension, consultant Ian Watson, Mike Tuccinardi from Segrest Farms, Lonnie Ready from Quality Marine, Eric Rasmussen (World of Pets, Portland, USA), several curators, aquarists and vets from public aquaria (Shedd Aquarium, New England Aquarium), photographers (including National Geographic) and press. With five OFI members on board, we were able to exchange many ideas.

In the words of the UK's historically famous prime minister, Winston Churchill: "However beautiful the strategy, we may occasionally want to look at the results". It was very much in the spirit of this statement that I wanted to see *Project Piaba's* new generation and the good initiatives being implemented by this 'still interesting and valuable' project for our wild fish sector. These latest developments have all been made possible with the help of Scott Dowd and the new manager of *Project Piaba Brazil*, Mrs. Mari Balsan (economist, university professor and GI specialist), along with great support from OFI member, Segrest Farms (USA).



*Dr. Tim Miller-Morgan and I held a personal microscopical diagnostic training session for Project Piaba trainees on the boat during the expedition.*

The recent conferring of Geographic Indication (GI) for Rio Negro fish, i.e. the first for ornamental fish, will also be of significant help in the future (see the above-mentioned article by John Dawes). In addition, it is important to mention that one of our members, Alex Tropicals (Czech Republic), has felt sufficiently responsible as a trader of tank-raised cardinal tetras to put into practice the Nagoya Protocol



*Scott Dowd (on the left) from Project Piaba USA, and two trainees from Project Piaba Brasil (Gabriel Franco de Sá - in the middle - and Radson Alves) talk to the fishermen about the project in Barcelos.*

principle of 'Benefit Sharing' by paying a sum to *Project Piaba* to support the local fishing communities.

Our group of specialists, along with the *Project Piaba* team, held many meetings with fishermen and public officers in Barcelos and Santa Isabel, as well as with ministries in Manaus. Dr. Tim and I also trained several biologists, aquarists and veterinarians in the practical use of the microscope for fast and practical detection and understanding of fish diseases, and several lectures were presented in the evening. Encouragingly, promises of financial support have been received by *Project Piaba* from the Ministries of Fisheries and Agriculture, and from SEBRAE (governmental supporter for small businesses).

After two weeks of visiting fishing grounds, collecting fish, meeting fishers and the people (trainees) involved under the guidance of Mrs. Mari Balsan, I can see a very good progression for this unique project focusing on the 'sustainable use of ornamental fish'. I therefore recommend that OFI continues to support the new-generation *Project Piaba*.

This project will give fishers the opportunity to obtain more tools and practical assistance to improve fish collecting and holding. For example, three new floating 'boats', i.e. temporary floating holding facilities for fish before they are transported to the exporters in Manaus, are being planned. These will make it possible to supply the fish in better condition and under better surveillance.

Of course, the exporters play a vital role in the chain of export of fish from the Rio Negro and their commitment will be extremely important. In this connection, I visited the four most important exporters in Manaus: Corydoras Aquarium, Tabatinga Aquarium, Prestige (Ruinemans) Aquarium and Amazon Peixes.

Gerald Bassleer

#### NOTE

*OFI Journal* No. 79 (October 2015) will include a detailed and interesting article from Scott Dowd and Mari Balsan regarding *Project Piaba's* plans, actions and future.