

## Introduction & Promotion of Culture of high value American channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*) in Pakistan

### Challenge

Fish farming in Pakistan is predominantly operating on extensive or limited level of semi intensive system. The fish farmers stock their ponds with local and Chinese carp in low stocking density ranging from 2000-2500 fish/ha with low inputs in the form of cow dung. This results in low fish productivity ranging 2500-3000 kg/ha. Catfish culture was lacking in the country in spite of strong market demand for these species due to low spine and good quality of meat. Because of high demand of Catfish, there was huge pressure on wild stock. Thus the population of catfish was at the verge of extinction in natural waters.

### PARC Intervention

The over exploitation of wild resources can be reduced through the introduction of catfish culture in the country. The American channel catfish was introduced in Pakistan by PARC scientists in 2003 through import from Thailand under the umbrella of an Agricultural Linkages Program (ALP) Project. This species was selected because of high consumer preference due to less spines (bones); good quality of meat; adaptability to wide range of environmental conditions; good growth in ponds with high stocking densities; easy to breed and high resistance to diseases.

### Outcome

Channel catfish was cultured in ponds at a stocking density of 3500 fish/ha and attained an average weight of 1.2 kg in one year with a total pond production of 4200 kg/ha. Channel catfish was successfully bred under pond conditions by placing different breeding nests in pond. It usually starts breeding in first week of May in ponds under local environment. Fry of channel catfish was successfully reared utilizing artificial diet (30% CP) formulated from locally available feed ingredients. No disease was reported in its pond culture during experimental period. Culture technology of channel catfish has been disseminated to 40 progressive farmers and all provincial fisheries directorates. The channel catfish is showing very good growth in different parts of the country. Aquaculture and Fisheries Program at ASI, NARC is continuously distributing more fish seed of catfish to several fish farmers in the country.



**American Channel Catfish**

*Non popularization of fish meat in the diet of people of Pakistan is due to large number of spines, slow growth and low per acre yield of local culturable fish species.*

*Development of successful*

