

Environmental Best Management Practices for Aquaculture

Edited by

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With 18 contributing authors



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Chapter 2

The Role of Better Management Practices in Environmental Management

Jason W. Clay

Introduction

Best management practices (BMPs) are increasingly regarded as meaningful goals in the overall reduction of on-farm and processing impacts and, by extension, cumulative impacts of agriculture. The adoption and encouragement of BMPs are often seen as an end itself in attempts to achieve continuous improvement in environmental performance. The assumption is that if the “best” practices are in place, producers are doing all that they can to avoid the worst impacts of production. This approach, whether BMP or GAP (good aquaculture practice), tends to divide the world into two camps—best or worst, good or bad. In reality, the implementation of a specific BMP will result in a range of environmental performance among producers, with most falling somewhere in the middle (Fig. 2.1). Although there can only be one “best” practice, many are likely to be “better” than a range of others. For that reason, throughout this chapter and most of this book, BMP refers to *better management practices*.

If continuous improvement is the goal, BMPs, by definition, are transitory and merely a means to an end, not the end itself. Furthermore, today’s best practice will be tomorrow’s norm and will eventually become the worst practice, to be avoided at some point in the future. If incremental improvement is the goal, surely today’s BMPs will give way to even better ones tomorrow. For these reasons the term *best management practice* is gradually giving way to better management practices. Fortunately the abbreviation BMP applies to both. Although subtle, the difference signals a fundamental shift in thinking.

One shift is the recognition that no single BMP reduces a key impact equally, whether considering all producers in a specific country or all producers of a particular species globally. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. The most effective BMPs depend on, among other things, the species cultured, type and magnitude of impact, scale of production, resources (capital, labor, land) available to the producer, and the overall management system already in place.

Another fundamental issue is that BMPs are often used as proxies for performance. It is assumed by many that the mere adoption of a BMP will always yield an acceptable

