TILAPIA: A POTENTIAL SPECIES FOR KENTUCKY FISH FARMS
Kentucky Fish Farming, 12(1): 6

William A. Wurts, State Specialist for Aquaculture
Kentucky State University Cooperative Extension Program
http://www.ca.uky.edu/wkrec/Wurtspage.htm

Several species of tilapia and their hybrids are farmed throughout the world. The blue tilapia (Tilapia aurea) is a species that has been grown in the United States. Another commonly cultured species is Tilapia nilotica. There is evidence to suggest the Egyptians raised tilapia in ponds over 3000 years ago. Tilapia are also called “Saint Peter’s Fish” because it has been said that they were the fish Peter caught when Christ told him to cast out his nets in the Sea of Galilee.

Tilapia have several attributes which make them attractive as a culture species: high tolerance of poor water quality and crowding, good performance on commercial catfish feed (32% protein), a high degree of disease resistance, and a mild flavored, white flesh. Because of their tolerance for poor water quality and crowding, tilapia are well suited to cage culture and recirculating systems. Research has also shown that in addition to controlling filamentous algae, tilapia stocked in channel catfish ponds can help control off-flavors by eating blue-green and other large planktonic algae.

Tilapia have a good growth rate. A 2- to 4-ounce tilapia fingerling can reach ¾ lb by the end of a temperate growing season. Tilapia performance is best in a temperature range of 72-90º F. Growth and feeding slow when water temperatures drop below 70º F. However, tilapia are cold intolerant and die when water temperatures are lower than 45-55º F. Blue tilapia will survive in lower water temperatures (above 45º F) than most other species of tilapia. The pond production season in Kentucky would begin in late April and end before the middle of October. Therefore, tilapia harvesting and marketing would be seasonal and within a week or two of the same time each year. Indoor culture of tilapia in recirculating systems could extend the growing season.

For related information click on the topics below:

POND CULTURE OF TILAPIA
Southern Regional Aquaculture Center, Publication No. 280
CAGE CULTURE OF TILAPIA
(back to Other Species page)