



# Current Report

PUBLISHED BY OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
DISTRIBUTED THROUGH COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICES

## CATFISH FARMING "Investigate Before You Invest"

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Catfish farming, a relatively new agricultural enterprise, is making a big splash in Oklahoma and in other south central states. The promise of easy money and high returns on short term investments is luring new people into the business daily. Popular articles painting a rosy picture on fish farming have encouraged this trend.

Catfish farming is a specialized agricultural practice which uses ponds to produce catfish by intensive management. This kind of farming requires controlling water quality, spawning, hatching, feeding, and harvesting and marketing the fish crop. Probably more technical information is needed in fish farming than in any other type of farming, so there is a lot of room for mistakes which may take away profits. One or two major mistakes can cost the farmer the entire crop.

Fish farming can provide high income, but the risks are great and losses can be tremendous. It is not a get-rich-quick scheme, but must be treated as a business. It costs a great deal of money, requires a lot of know-how, a lot of hard work, and the ability to capitalize on other people's experiences. Certainly it is much wiser to INVESTIGATE BEFORE YOU INVEST.

Here are a few items for consideration: There are many more.

WATER is the key to successful commercial fish farming. WATER, WATER; Plenty of high quality water can be a life saver in times of emergency, treatment of diseases, during periods of low oxygen and for numerous other facets of fish culture.

Water sources can include run-off water diverted from streams or ponds or well water.

Professional advice should be sought wherever the development of land is considered.

Ponds should be constructed on lands which will readily hold water.

Construction of ponds costs from \$300 to \$1000, depending on the lay of the land.

Operation of a large pond requires more experience than a smaller one.

There is not a national plan for fish farming.

Management is the key to successful operation of fish farms.

Don't go into the fish farming business until you are sure you have a market for your product.

The fish farmer must find his own market at this stage of the game.



Stock the largest fingerlings available so fish will reach market size in a single grow-season.

Most feeds for catfish are 25 to 32% protein.

Feed costs for fish represent about 28% of the sale price.

Feeding rates must closely follow the growth of the fish.

Excessive algal blooms or too much feed may result in oxygen depletions which could kill an entire crop.

Parasite free stock & preventive treatments for disease are much cheaper than treating entire ponds.

Important changes can be expected in fish farming enterprises in the next few years and producers able to adapt to new technology will prosper.

Production has been from 0-2000 lbs. per acre (average around 1000 lbs./acre.)

Profit has been from 0-\$1000 per acre (average around \$150/acre.)

Harvesting farm catfish is still a rather haphazard procedure, often time-consuming and expensive.

Rising costs of production and harvesting should be considered.

Imports of catfish from South America are increasing and can be sold considerably lower than farm raised catfish.

Cage culture where fish are grown under small areas of confinement with extensive management is still in the experimental stages.

Research in cage culture is now being done by many people and agencies and universities including Okla. State Univ.

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Before going into fish farming, equip yourself with the latest information and help available. Visit fish farms already in operation. Establish contacts for professional advice, start small and grow into the business. Keep good records. Technical assistance and advice are available at state and federal levels, and from private consultants and industry. Contact your county extension director, soil conservation representative, state wildlife dept., universities or colleges, and the U. S. Fish Farming Experimental Station in Stuttgart, Ark. for additional advice and assistance. "INVESTIGATE BEFORE YOU INVEST."

The following references can supply you with valuable information. There are many, many more and the number will increase as the business develops.

Report to the Fish Farmers, Pub.83, Bur. of Sport Fish. & Wild., Bx 860, Stuttgart, Ark.

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Economic & Business Dimensions of the Catfish Farming Industry, Bur. of Fish. 5 Research Drive, Ann Arbor, Mich.

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