COBIA AQUACULTURE IN PERNAMBUCO, BRAZIL

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Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) is native to Brazilian coastal waters and, due to its market value and rapid growth, it is being considered for culture in offshore cages and earthen ponds in Brazil. The present article presents a brief background as well as the current status of the offshore farming operations of cobia in the state of Pernambuco, northeastern Brazil. The main bottlenecks and perspectives for the development of offshore cobia aquaculture in Brazil are therefore presented and discussed.

ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE BASIS FOR OPEN OCEAN MARINE FISH FARMING IN BRAZIL: THE *CAÇÃO DE ESCAMA* PROJECT

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Commercial marine finfish production is not a reality in Brazil. For several years, fat snook (*Centropomus parallelus*) and flounder (*Paralicithys orbignyanus*) were considered for aquaculture, but their commercial application has not yet been demonstrated. As the technology for rearing cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) became available elsewhere, several Brazilian companies showed interest for marine fish farming. Native to Brazilian waters, cobia was the species of choice due to its rapid growth and easiness to produce large numbers of laboratory-reared juveniles. Although pond culture of cobia is currently being tested, most initiatives in Brazil project the use of Norwegian style HDPE floating cages in open waters. In 2008, the first privately owned open ocean aquaculture venture was granted 169 hectares in federal waters. Their site was located 15 km from the coast off Recife, Pernambuco, and was characterized by pristine oceanic waters. Although in 2010 they produced 40 tons of 3-4 kg cobia in one 5,400 m³ cage, their operation never went beyond its pilot phase due to a series of problems related to the pioneering nature of such a venture. Since 2010, a government funded open ocean grow-out farm run by the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UFRPE) started operating in the same area. This project, named "Cação de Escama", has four 1,200 m³ floating cages and serves as a research and training facility, as well as a demonstrative unit. Based on the experience gained from this experience, the main bottlenecks and perspectives for the development of open ocean aquaculture in Brazil will be presented and discussed.