

Cameroon's Fish Breeding Program

A fish breeding project is improving the lives of people from Cameroon and aquarium fish.

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Many aquarium fish come from the rain forests of Cameroon, and a sustainable fish-breeding project has been put in place there that benefits both the aquarium fish and Cameroonian collectors.

Many aquarium fish species come from West Africa, especially from the rain forest in Cameroon. Here, a sustainable fish-breeding project begun by the World Fish Center (WFC) is helping to improve living conditions for people in rural Cameroon while also saving the lives of many fish that have been caught for the aquarium trade.

A senior scientist with the World Fish Center, Randall Brummett, says that before this program started, the lack of care that exporters gave their fish resulted in high mortality rates. The program actually started after Brummett received a phone call from a veterinarian from Paris who said that he constantly received shipments of fish from Cameroon that arrived 90 percent dead.

The program provides incentives to improve fish survival rates. The fish companies are now paid for the number of live fish that arrive in each shipment, and village collectors can take classes to learn how to better care for the fish they catch.

Funding for this WFC project was provided for by the World Bank, which has the goals of a low mortality rate of exported fish and to prove the value of the local rain forest ecosystem to local Cameroonian authorities, who may lobby to protect the wildlife area.

The World Fish Center is looking to expand by creating more storage space for the fish. Their current facility is not big enough to hold the amount of fish supplied, but there is no budget yet for more space. The project has been successful so far, improving the quality of life for the aquarium fish, as well as the collectors in Cameroon. Brummett said that the collectors "make about five or six times more than they used to, the main reason being that our survival rate is up to more than 90 percent now."