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## Impact of aquaculture development on water quality of fish ponds in gatundu North and south sub-counties, Kenya

**Theuri Olive Wairimu, Kitur Esther, Ngugi CC, Mwangi BM and Nzeve JK**

### Abstract

Aquaculture development in Kenya has increased in the recent past due to Government support, however, information on its influence on water quality is scanty. This study looked at the influence of fish culture on water quality in fish ponds. Water samples were collected from pond inlets and fish ponds and physico-chemical parameters analyzed. Means of measured parameters at the pond inlets were; Temp( $21.27 \pm 3.31$  °C), DO( $4.45 \pm 0.73$ mg/l), EC( $27.38 \pm 17.21$ µS/cm), TDS( $368.61 \pm 135.21$ mg/l), pH( $7.31 \pm 0.45$ ), N-NO<sub>3</sub>( $2.06 \pm 2.38$ mg/l) and PO<sub>4</sub>-P( $0.29 \pm 0.41$ mg/l) while mean values inside the ponds were; Temp ( $23.58 \pm 3.85$  °C), DO( $4.89 \pm 1.09$ mg/L), EC( $34.63 \pm 19.50$ µScm<sup>-1</sup>) TDS( $493.13 \pm 136.67$ mg/l), pH( $7.68 \pm 0.50$ ), NO<sub>3</sub>( $2.76 \pm 2.35$ mg/L) and PO<sub>4</sub>P ( $1.71 \pm 1.50$ mg/L). Values of measured parameters were within acceptable limits for aquaculture as per WHO standards. All parameters significantly increased in pond water as compared to inlet water showing that aquaculture was contributing to deterioration of the water quality in fishponds. This calls for effluent treatment, regular monitoring and sensitization of farmers on good aquaculture practices.

**Keywords:** Aquaculture development, fish culture, water quality, physico-chemical parameters

### 1. Introduction

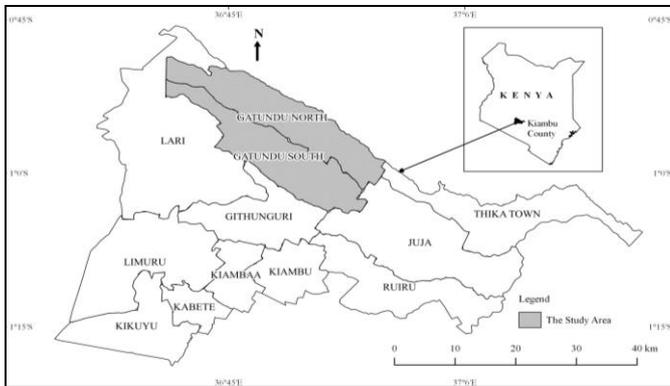
Aquaculture in the world has been practiced in many countries and is the only sustainable solution to the declining natural fish stocks as a source of food [1]. On the global scene, aquaculture has seen a rapid growth in the recent past [2] and is projected to contribute over 50% of the total fisheries production by 2020 [3]. Kenya's natural fish stocks from lakes and rivers, contribute about 90% of the national fish production statistics, there's however a declining production trend since the wild stocks have reached maximum sustainable yield [4, 5]. The Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) implemented by the Kenya Government from 2009 to 2012 increased production from aquaculture from a mere 4000 MT to slightly over 20,000MT in 2013 [6, 7]. Before ESP, aquaculture in the country was practiced mainly in semi-intensive systems, where ponds were fertilized and feeds used as supplements to increase fish yields [8]. However, during ESP farmers embraced more intensive systems towards increasing pond productivity [7]. Pond fertilization generates high nutrient levels that lead to increase in natural pond productivity [9]. Remains of fish feeds that are not consumed by fish accumulate in the pond water and may deteriorate fish pond water quality [10, 11]. Aquaculture development is therefore faced with a challenge of increasing productivity whereas ensuring minimal impact on the environment [12].

Pollutants of Fish pond water include; residual food, faecal matter, pathogenic bacteria, viruses and parasites, suspended solids, drugs and disinfectants [13]. Pond waste water if disposed untreated can therefore alter water quality in the receiving waters [14]. A global concern over the impact of aquaculture on the environment has led to promotion of good aquaculture practices that are environment-friendly [15]. Although aquaculture continues to expand, information on the impact of aquaculture on the environmental is minimal [11]. This research therefore, sought to address the impact of aquaculture growth on the fish pond water quality in Gatundu, Kenya.

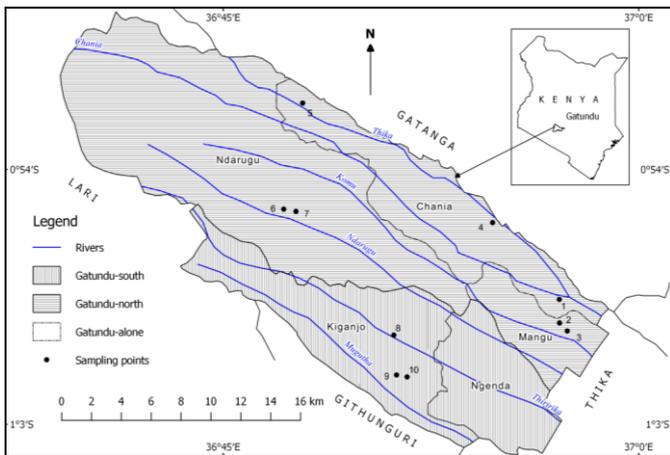
## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Study Location

This study was carried out in Gatundu North and Gatundu South Sub Counties of Kiambu County, Kenya (Figure 1). The study area lies between latitude ( $1^{\circ}1'0''$  S) and longitude ( $36^{\circ}56'0''$  E) and between altitude 1520 m and 2280 m above sea level [16]. It is 50 Km North West of the Kenyan capital city Nairobi and covers an area of 481.1 Km<sup>2</sup>.



**Fig 1:** Map of Kiambu County Showing the Location of Gatundu the study area. (Source: Kiambu County Government, 2013)



**Fig 2:** Map showing location of Gatundu the study area and the sampling sites (Source: Modified: Kiambu County Government, 2013).

### 2.2 Data Collection

Water samples were collected from 10 fish ponds purposively selected. The ponds had a minimum maturity of sixth months from stocking. An agreement was made with the farmers not to do a complete harvest or dispose the pond waste water during the study period. Selected physical parameters were measured on site. A multi-electrode water testing probe (Model: DO 5510 MRC) was used to determine the water temperature and Dissolved Oxygen (DO), while pH was measured using pH meter (Model: HI 98107 HANNAH). Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) was determined using TDS meter (Model: 4076 Jenway) while Electrical Conductivity meter (Model: 4010 Jenway) was used to measure EC. Sampling plastic bottles of 250 ml were cleaned using 10% nitric acid and rinsed in distilled water. Prior to sample collection the bottles were rinsed three times with sample water. Sampling was then done at two points; at the inlet of the pond just before the water got into the fish pond and at the farthest point of the pond from the inlet, a meter away from the pond dyke to ensure no influence by the inflow and human or animal activity. Scooping of the sample was done at

a depth of 0.3m below water surface. Water samples were collected every 2 months for a period of 11 months starting May 2015 to March 2016. Samples for the analysis of Nitrates and phosphates were taken through standard laboratory procedures [17]. UV-Visible spectrophotometric method was used to determine nitrate concentrations while Molybdenum blue method was used to determine Phosphate concentrations.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine significant difference ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) within pond samples and within inlet water samples. Independent t-test was used in the comparison of means between inlet and pond water, while Student Newman Keuls (SNK) test was used to separate the means where there was a significant difference.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1 Temperature

Water temperature among ponds and among inlet water did not differ significantly ( $p=0.836$ ) and ( $p=0.819$ ) respectively. There was however a significant difference between inlet and pond water ( $p=0.001$ ) as shown in Table 1. Mean temperature in inlet water was ( $21.27 \pm 3.31$  °C) and ( $23.58 \pm 3.85$  °C) in pond water. The values were well within permissible limit for aquaculture, which is 15-35 °C but slightly below optimal levels for tilapia and catfish 25-32 °C [18] and WHO limit (25 °C). Inlet and pond water temperature differed significantly since the pond water was static and shallow. This results in warmer ambient temperatures due to long hours of exposure to the sun's rays. Aquaculture activities also increase suspended particles in water which absorb heat from sunlight more efficiently thus warming up pond water faster than the clearer inlet water. Temperature range observed in the study (17.5-32 °C) was within range of 18-32 °C of Bangladesh fish ponds [19], 20.9-33.8 °C reported in India [20], 23.2-32.7 °C in South East Brazil [21] and 21-28 °C in Ghana ponds [22]. Temperature recorded in Inlet water (17-29 °C) was within range of studies in tropical river ecosystems, rivers of Gatundu South recorded 19.55-23.05 °C [23], River Narmada in India (22.4-29 °C) [24] while 26.8-33.7 °C was reported in River Asu of Nigeria [25].

### 3.2 Dissolved Oxygen (DO)

DO did not differ significantly among ponds ( $p=1.142$ ) and among inlets ( $p=0.903$ ). Pond water had significantly higher levels of DO than inlet water ( $p=0.011$ ). Mean DO in pond water and inlet water was  $4.89 \pm 1.09$  mg/L and  $4.45 \pm 0.73$  mg/L respectively (Table 1). The DO levels in pond water is presented in Table 2 while Table 3 shows the range for the inlet water. The DO levels were within WHO requirements of 4-6 mg/L but slightly below the optimum for aquaculture [18]. Fertilization of pond water by farmers in a bid to increase productivity caused algal growth and consequently increased DO significantly in the pond water as compared to the inlet water. The DO in pond water (4.72-5.02 mg/L) was within range of similar studies done in Bangladesh ponds 1.1-6.9 mg/L [26], Bayelsa ponds in Nigeria 2.8-5.1 mg/L [27] and 2.0-8.6 mg/L in Karnataka India [28]. DO levels in inlet water (2.98-6.94 mg/L) were within the same range with those reported in river Kibisu 2.26-8.94 mg/L [29], Asu river of Nigeria 3.0-8.7 mg/L [25] and 4.16-8.8 mg/L in India [24], but lower than 6.37-7.76 mg/L reported in Gatundu south rivers [23].

**Table 1:** Physico-chemical parameters in pond and inlet water

Parameter		Mean±SD	Min -Max	P - Value
Temperature (°C)	Pond	23.58±3.85	17.5-32	P = 0.001
	Inlet	21.27±3.31	17-29	
pH	Pond	7.68±0.50	6.8-9	P < 0.001
	Inlet	7.31±0.45	6.4-8.7	
Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	Pond	4.89±1.09	3.77-7.42	P = 0.011
	Inlet	4.45±0.73	2.98-6.94	
TDS (mg/L)	Pond	493.13±136.67	230-820	P < 0.001
	Inlet	368.61±135.21	198-736	
Conductivity (µs/cm)	Pond	34.63±19.50	9-83	P = 0.037
	Inlet	27.38±17.21	9-78	
Nitrates (mg/L)	Pond	2.76±2.35	0.16-9.81	P = 0.105
	Inlet	2.06±2.38	0.03-8.38	
Phosphates (mg/L)	Pond	1.71±1.50	0.01-4.76	P < 0.001
	Inlet	0.29±0.41	0.01-1.86	

**Table 2:** Means ± SD values of Physico-chemical parameters in fish pond water. (Means within the same column with similar superscripts do not differ significantly from one another).

Site	Temp. °C	DO (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	pH	TDS (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	EC (µScm <sup>-1</sup> )	Nitrates (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	Phosphates (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )
P1	23.58±3.72	4.81±1.15	7.95±0.55	484.83±107.92	35.60±13.79 <sup>b</sup>	1.47±1.70	1.28±0.94
P2	25.67±6.47	4.87±1.18	7.77±0.29	540.50±97.18	33.17±18.76 <sup>b</sup>	3.22±2.42	2.26±1.83
P3	24.33±4.18	4.97±1.33	7.97±0.56	497.33±134.38	27.00±15.19 <sup>a</sup>	2.55±3.60	1.20±1.02
P4	22.00±4.38	4.72±1.07	7.77±0.73	373.67±52.21	26.20±14.69 <sup>a</sup>	2.98±1.26	2.28±1.54
P5	24.83±3.37	4.77±1.08	7.67±0.54	591.60±181.26	18.40±4.51 <sup>a</sup>	3.28±3.07	2.41±1.93
P6	22.25±3.52	5.02±1.33	7.53±0.35	436.17±90.27	37.33±20.53 <sup>b</sup>	1.89±1.82	1.20±1.45
P7	22.33±4.03	4.77±1.10	7.32±0.41	579.00±182.62	33.33±20.18 <sup>b</sup>	3.12±3.09	2.32±1.16
P8	23.00±2.10	5.01±1.12	7.52±0.52	469.17±111.16	33.17±17.84 <sup>b</sup>	2.90±1.86	0.69±0.68
P9	23.67±3.44	4.94±1.14	7.70±0.60	488.83±171.73	34.50±20.23 <sup>b</sup>	2.44±1.97	1.51±1.75
P10	24.17±3.31	5.00±1.29	7.58±0.21	480.00±164.23	63.67±18.57 <sup>c</sup>	3.79±2.65	1.69±2.01

### 3.3 pH

There was significant difference in pH between pond water and inlet water ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, there were no significant difference in pH recorded among the ponds sampled and among the inlet water samples ( $p > 0.05$ ). The significant difference noted could be as result of algae productivity since farmers fertilized pond water to increase fish production. Mean pond water pH for pond and inlet water is presented in Table 1 while the pH range of pond water and in inlet water

are presented in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively. PH range in ponds (6.8-9) was within WHO limit for aquaculture which is (6.5-8.5). The levels were also optimal for fish growth (6.7-9.5) [30]. Results of this study (7.32-7.96) were similar to related studies in Bangladesh ponds (pH 7.0-8.8) [31] and pH 6.7-7.4 in Ogun state, Nigeria [32]. PH range in the inlet water was similar to studies done in Gatundu South rivers [23] where pH range of 6.68 -7.63 was recorded.

**Table 3:** Means ± SD values of Physico-chemical parameters at the inlet. (Means within the same column with similar superscripts do not differ significantly from one another).

Site	Temp. (°C)	DO (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	pH	TDS (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	EC (µScm <sup>-1</sup> )	Nitrates (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )	Phosphates (mgL <sup>-1</sup> )
S1	19.83±3.54	4.62±0.39	7.43±0.21	311.33±98.45	21.83±4.02 <sup>a</sup>	0.48±0.32	0.07±0.03
S2	23.17±5.71	4.55±0.59	7.25±0.29	364.67±146.55	28.50±12.91 <sup>a</sup>	1.50±2.93	0.29±0.47
S3	21.83±4.26	4.46±0.52	7.47±0.47	457.17±214.31	19.00±6.42 <sup>a</sup>	0.61±0.44	0.58±0.84
S4	20.67±3.93	4.49±0.83	7.53±0.24	387.00±141.75	23.00±12.31 <sup>a</sup>	1.95±3.16	0.35±0.27
S5	22.33±2.94	4.32±0.75	7.38±0.35	409.80±53.42	20.00±6.00 <sup>a</sup>	4.28±2.78	0.19±0.16
S6	20.67±2.66	4.44±0.70	7.05±0.59	398.17±91.31	29.33±20.29 <sup>a</sup>	1.38±1.53	0.16±0.16
S7	21.67±3.27	4.01±0.28	7.18±0.37	417.83±102.19	27.00±8.10 <sup>a</sup>	1.62±1.65	0.21±0.24
S8	20.83±2.14	4.65±1.16	7.27±0.62	268.00±101.24	24.00±15.07 <sup>a</sup>	2.79±2.81	0.13±0.14
S9	21.67±1.75	4.68±0.93	7.33±0.72	327.33±184.19	22.00±14.64 <sup>a</sup>	2.32±2.51	0.07±0.05
S10	20.00±2.19	4.23±0.99	7.23±0.49	343.25±116.80	56.67±28.07 <sup>b</sup>	3.40±2.14	0.66±0.46

### 3.4 Total dissolved Solids (TDS)

TDS levels between pond and inlet water varied significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ), concentrations among ponds and among inlets were however not significantly different ( $p = 0.234$ ) and ( $p = 0.420$ ) respectively. Mean TDS in pond water was 493.13±136.67mg/L, while mean TDS in inlet water was 368.61±135.21mg/L (Table 1). TDS values for pond water and inlet water are presented in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively. Recorded TDS levels in both pond and inlet water were within WHO (1000mg/L) requirements for

aquaculture. TDS in pond water was significantly higher than at the inlets due to use of feeds, fertilizers and manure in aquaculture which increases dissolved ions and consequently TDS levels. The TDS levels in this study (373-591mg/L) were higher but within range of other studies, Nigeria ponds reported wider ranges of 22-906 mg/L [33] and 40-620mg/L [34], while ponds in Bangladesh had much lower TDS levels of 87.6 to 220mg/L [19]. TDS levels in inlet water (268-457mg/L) were within range of 257-348mg/L recorded in River Kibisu [29], but higher than River Narmada which recorded a range of

146-274mg/L<sup>[24]</sup>.

### 3.5 Electrical Conductivity

Electrical Conductivity (EC) levels in pond and inlet water was significantly different ( $p=0.037$ ). Concentrations among ponds and among inlets were also significantly different ( $p=0.014$ ) and ( $p=0.004$ ) respectively. Mean EC levels in pond water ( $34.63\pm 19.50\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ ) and inlet water ( $27.38\pm 17.21\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ ) were within WHO limit for aquaculture ( $1000\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ ), but below the optimal requirement ( $100\text{--}2000\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ )<sup>[30]</sup>. Use of manure for pond fertilization and fish feeds in ponds increased TDS, ionic concentration and hence EC in fish ponds causing significant difference in EC between inlet and pond water. EC in aquatic systems is influenced greatly by the bedrock on which rivers flow<sup>[36]</sup>. The geological characteristics of the surroundings<sup>[35]</sup> influenced EC levels which were significantly different among ponds and among inlets. Weather patterns during the study period also caused fluctuating water levels influencing water temperature, TDS and consequently EC<sup>[37]</sup>. Student Newman Keuls (SNK) test revealed high EC in Pond 10 both at the inlet and pond water. The pond which was situated near a tea plantation could have been influenced by leaching of agricultural inputs into inlet water and then into pond water.

A Similar study in Busia County recorded EC levels of  $34.67\text{--}86.67\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ <sup>[36]</sup>, which were within range of this study ( $18.40\text{--}63.67\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ ). South East Brazil ponds had a wider range of  $24\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$  to  $610\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ <sup>[21]</sup> while Ghana and India ponds recorded higher EC levels of  $102.2\text{--}132.30\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ <sup>[22]</sup> and  $118.7\text{--}206.6\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ <sup>[20]</sup> respectively. EC levels at the inlets in this study ( $19.00\text{--}56.67\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ ) were within similar range as Gatundu south rivers ( $25.20\text{--}134.40\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ )<sup>[23]</sup> but lower than River Benue of Nigeria that reported  $64.70\text{--}139.60\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ ,<sup>[38]</sup> and  $134.9\text{--}166\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$  in River Kibisu<sup>[29]</sup>.

### 3.6 Nitrate-Nitrogen (NO<sub>3</sub>-N)

Levels of Nitrate-Nitrogen were not significantly different between pond and inlet water ( $p=0.105$ ) as shown in Table 1. Concentrations within ponds and within inlet water were also not significantly different ( $p=0.882$  and  $p=0.133$  respectively). Means of Nitrate-Nitrogen concentrations were  $2.76\pm 2.35$  in pond water and  $2.06\pm 2.38$  in inlet water (Table 1). Levels in pond and inlet water were within WHO limit ( $50\text{mg}/\text{L}$ ) and within optimal range for aquaculture  $0.1$  to  $4.5\text{mg}/\text{L}$ <sup>[39]</sup>. It was expected that nitrate levels in pond and inlet water would be significantly different due to fish culture impact on pond water,<sup>[40]</sup> However, this study showed no significant impact of fish culture on nitrates. This could be due to oxidization of Nitrates to nitrites and ammonia by aerobic bacteria in the nitrogen cycle<sup>[41]</sup>.

Similar studies found insignificant impact of fish culture activities on Nitrate-Nitrogen levels in fish pond effluent<sup>[42,43]</sup>, However studies on Nigeria ponds recorded nitrate levels of  $2.21\text{--}4.91\text{mg}/\text{L}$  and  $1.21\text{--}9.24\text{mg}/\text{L}$ <sup>[33, 44]</sup> which were higher than this study ( $1.47\text{--}3.79\text{mg}/\text{L}$ ). Nitrate-Nitrogen levels in inlet water ( $0.48\text{--}4.28\text{mg}/\text{L}$ ) were higher than  $0.05\text{--}4.4\text{mg}/\text{L}$  recorded in Ethiopia<sup>[45]</sup>,  $0.01\text{--}0.05\text{mg}/\text{L}$  in River Asu<sup>[25]</sup> and  $0.66$  to  $0.70\text{mg}/\text{L}$  in Gatundu south rivers<sup>[23]</sup>.

### 3.7 Ortho-Phosphates (PO<sub>4</sub>-P)

Levels of orthophosphate concentration in pond water and inlet water were significantly different  $p<0.001$  (Table 1). There was however no significant difference within sampled pond water ( $p= 0.543$ ) and within inlet water samples

( $p=0.366$ ). Orthophosphate levels in this study were within WHO limits for aquaculture ( $0.03\text{--}3\text{mg}/\text{L}$ ). Use of fertilizers and phosphorous-rich fish feeds impact phosphate concentrations in fish ponds significantly<sup>[46]</sup>. More mature ponds have higher levels of phosphates<sup>[47]</sup>. Orthophosphate levels in pond water in this study ( $0.69\text{--}2.41\text{mg}/\text{L}$ ) were within range of  $0.51\text{--}1.28\text{mg}/\text{L}$  reported in India<sup>[28]</sup>. Nigeria ponds however had higher and wider ranges of  $1.40\text{--}4.51\text{mg}/\text{L}$  and  $0.01\text{--}0.90\text{mg}/\text{L}$ <sup>[33, 44]</sup>. Orthophosphate levels in inlet water ( $0.07\text{--}0.66\text{mg}/\text{L}$ ) were within range of  $0.02\text{--}0.16\text{mg}/\text{L}$  in Nigeria<sup>[25]</sup>,  $0.35\text{--}0.6\text{mg}/\text{L}$  in Gatundu south<sup>[23]</sup>, and  $0.112\text{--}0.546\text{mg}/\text{L}$  in River Narmada<sup>[24]</sup>.

### 4. Conclusion

This study concluded that fishpond waste water quality is within the allowable limits thus not an immediate threat to the aquatic systems. However, aquaculture activities are significantly impacting on the quality of pond water. There was a significant increase in concentration of physico-chemical parameters in fish ponds as compared to the inlets except for nitrate-nitrogen. These results imply substantial influence of fish culture activities on water quality and show potential for pollution of recipient waters by untreated pond waste water. However, the study noted an increase in Dissolved Oxygen (DO) and pH levels in ponds as compared to the inlets this implies that Good Aquaculture Practices could actually improve pond water quality. The study therefore recommended that fish pond waste water be treated before release to open water bodies to avoid eutrophication of receiving waters. Other safe disposal methods like irrigation of appropriate plants and aquaculture recirculation systems be considered. Regular monitoring of fish pond water quality will be critical for sustainable aquaculture development. Training of fish farmers on Good Aquaculture Practices such as optimal fertilization and efficient feeding is important in maintaining and even improving pond water quality.

### 5. Acknowledgement

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