

FROM THE FARM



Regal Springs: the farmers' experience

If the environment and our people are stable then our production is stable and our customers are stable. Everything is tied together.

Magdalena Wallhoff, VP Branding and Social Investment

Regal Springs' Toba Farm (Sumatra) and Kedung Ombo Farm (Java) were the first tilapia farms to gain ASC certification. Regal Springs started as an alternative to development aid in 1988, with the clear goal of producing high quality tilapia in clean waters, working with local farmers and employing local people. Regal Springs now operates in nine locations across Indonesia, Honduras and Mexico.

What makes us different? "From the beginning the tilapia farm was seen as an alternative to development aid. The founder saw that resources were being wasted because no one felt a true responsibility," explains Magdalena Wallhoff, VP Branding and Social Investment.

"We made the tilapia farm for-profit so that everyone's performance determines the success or failure. That way everyone cares and wants to do it well."

As a private company there is immense personal pride in Regal Springs. "With us living in the local community there was even more pressure to ensure that it worked well."

"They were our town and our people, you can't ignore their needs," says Wallhoff. "There's a tremendous joy to work with local people as well as improve their situation. You see the growth and it's very rewarding."

How we protect the environment Much work goes into protecting the water shed, conducting water quality analysis and other tests. But, most importantly, it is the work with the local community that ensures the long term benefits.

"We work with the communities to teach them about preserving their environment, since we all benefit from a healthy ecosystem," explains Wallhoff.

Other work includes using or recycling all by-products. "We have zero waste. We use every part of the fish and even the effluent water goes into, for example, irrigating the rice paddies," says Wallhoff. "We produce bio-diesel and we run some of our trucks and small generators with that." Regal Springs also has a programme of reforestation in the fight against erosion.

"We have zero waste. We use every part of the fish and even the effluent water goes into, for example, irrigating the rice paddies."

How we support the local community The farmers work with local schools to help build children's knowledge and understanding of the environment. "In Honduras we work with a foundation that develops a curriculum for elementary students and a big part of that is the environmental aspect covering land and natural resource preservation," says Wallhoff.

"We also offer adult education for our employees across the business. And in Lake Penitas in Mexico this has been extended to the local community."



Regal Springs also relies on the local communities for logistical and supply chain support, creating thousands of additional jobs for the regions.

How we ensure a healthy, quality product Through their responsible management practices Regal Springs ensure the production of healthy, high quality tilapia.

“We have a very long history with tilapia and know what ensures healthy, good quality fish,” explains Wallhoff. “We know what stocking densities are healthy for fish and we have very clean water and all of these things are disease prevention. We regularly vaccinate our fish and we do not have to use antibiotics. We are genetically selecting our fish for robustness.”

Why we chose ASC certification “I think, to be honest, at first we thought, what is certification going to do? Certification will never be enough. Responsibility has to go deeper than merely getting a stamp of approval from one group. We were already doing these things before certifications came along,” says Wallhoff.

“Ideally we’d all just live in small communities with fishing ponds and we wouldn’t have these big farms. But they are part of the future, so we need to have standards. What certification does is differentiate you and give credence to those who are doing it well.”

*“What certification does is differentiate
you and give credence
to those who are doing it well.”*

Benefits of ASC certification The environmental and social measures were already in place before the ASC certification process, but Regal Springs saw certification as a communication tool for grocers.

The certification confirms for consumers and retailers what Regal Springs already knew. The decades of conservation

management and working with and supporting local communities are testament to the farmer’s environmental and social responsibility.

However, “ASC certification helps us when our customers ask for it,” explains Wallhoff. “Consumers want to know that someone is looking out and we realise that customers like to have a recognisable symbol.”

What responsible management brings The benefits of environmental and social responsibility are clear to Regal Springs. They work to control the feed conversion ratio so feed costs are reduced, which means big savings, as does keeping mortalities at a minimum.

“We farm using floating cages in very deep water where the water quality is very good,” says Wallhoff. “We manage our stock densities and with a programme of vaccination this all ensures minimum mortalities.”

Wallhoff explains that through their years of experience they have been able to retain the healthiest broodstock, which has a big impact on the farm’s bottom line.

In addition, the sense of ownership that the employees have makes a big difference to their performance. “When employees are motivated and they are excited about what we are doing they are quick to offer solutions. If an employee sees something that is inefficient the teams come up with a solution. It’s magic when they feel a part of it,” says Wallhoff.

“That attitude is also extended towards our customers. If the environment and our people are stable then our production is stable and our customers are stable. Everything is tied together.”

For the future For now Regal Springs is focusing on growth in Mexico and the social initiatives they plan to run there. They are also reviewing their social investments overall and evaluating all their projects.