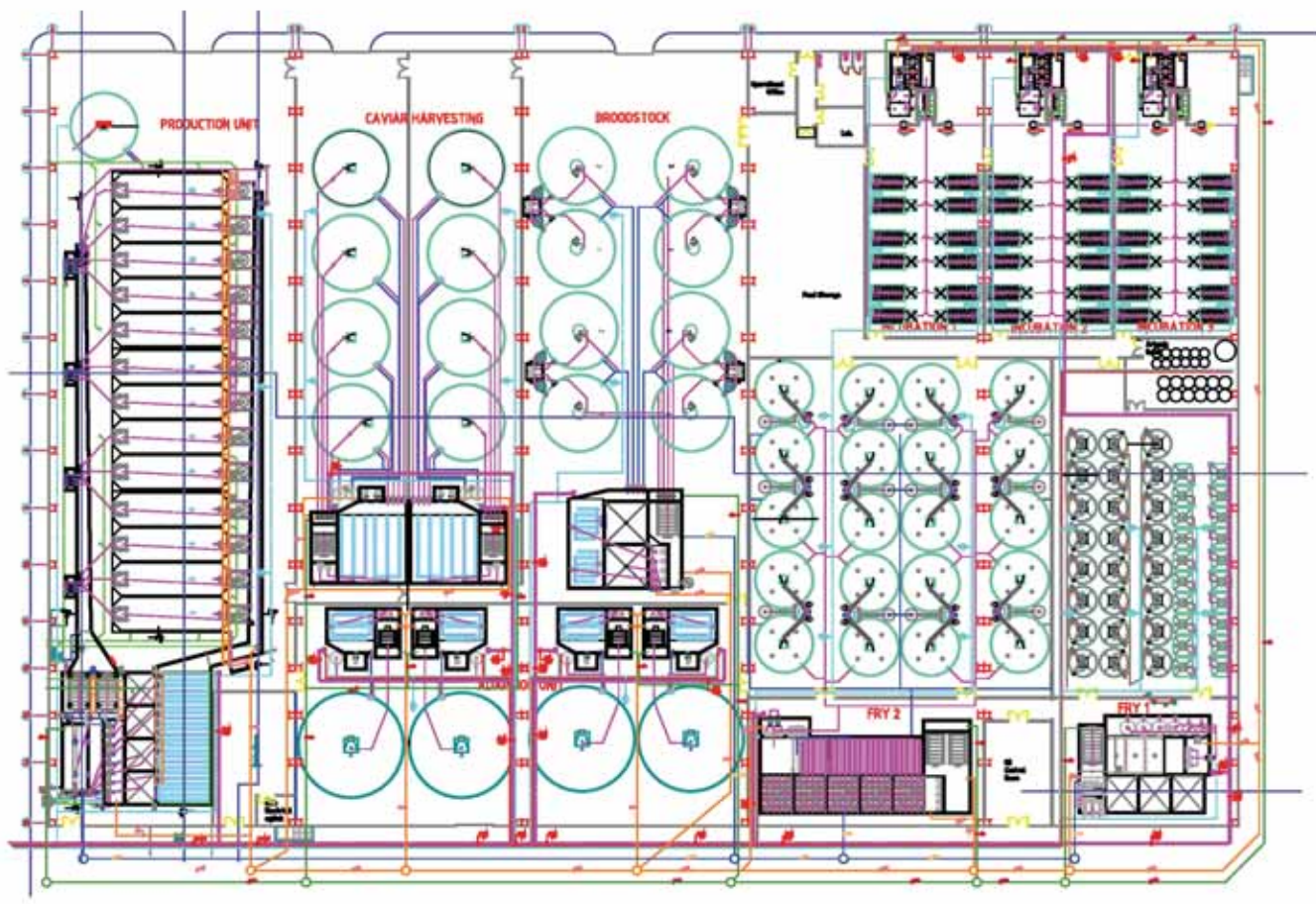
FEATURE

Germany's aquaFuture oversees sturgeon project on the Caspian

New hatchery will help restore endangered stocks



The module pictured above is similar to the unit that aquaFuture is building in Turkmenistan. It was built for Sheriff Ltd in Moldova and has been operating since November, 2006. Below is a schematic of the new facility being built in Turkmenistan.

The aquaFUTURE company of Germany is acting as lead consultant and overseeing contractor on a $41.8 million (USD) sturgeon hatchery and sturgeon meat and caviar production operation on the banks of the Caspian Sea close to Türkmenbasy. It is slated for completion next spring.

According to company owner Dietmar Firzlaff, the multi-faceted complex is being put together with the primary objective, in the early stages at least, of acting as a crucial stock-protection and restoration program for endangered sturgeon in the Caspian Sea.

Other stock for the Caspian Sea may be added at a later date.

A substantial project of the extensive Abka Yap Sanayi Ve Ticaret Ltd company of the Turkmenistan government, the project is seen as being of such importance to the government that it is being overseen by the president himself.

Firzlaff said the main production facility will measure 25,000 square metres and contain 260 tanks of various sizes containing some 6,750 cubic metres of water for the fish.

The hatchery is being built and equipped by the Billund Aquakultur Service ApS company of Denmark, which has more than 20 years in producing equipment for culturing a wide variety of both freshwater and saltwater fish, including sturgeon, sea bass, sea bream, turbot, cod, snappers, tilapia, cobia, groupers and carp.

The accompanying processing plant is to be constructed by Turkey's FPT Ltd., which manufactures machinery and equipment for fish processing, including fish pumps, grading machines and filleting equipment.

The complex, which will draw its water from the Caspian Sea, will also have its own quarantine building where imported baby sturgeon will be held for a period prior to being fully integrated into the main program.

All three main parts of the operation, the hatchery, the processing plant and the quarantine facility, will have their own water-recirculation and treatment systems. The project with aquaFUTURE will also include a large boat for scientific work and a feed factory, not to mention specialists and other organisations will be involved for health management, the training and supervision of staff and scientific support work.

Firzlaff told this publication a few weeks ago that the engineering drawings and ground preparation were all complete and construction was about to begin, with the first fish expected to go into the state-of-the-art operation sometime next summer.

"It's a very large restocking program," emphasized Firzlaff. "That's more important than the meat and the caviar. It'll be able to produce five million fingerlings of up to 200 grams a year. We see entry into the buildings next May, and then it will be another eight weeks before the system can be run. So it will be August before there are fish in the hatchery."

He said he sees 2008 as a year for testing the technology, with large production starting in the spring of the following year. The operation will include the most modern desalination and water-treatment systems, as well as up-to-date technology to prevent any pollution to the Caspian Sea.

Firzlaff indicated that the project already has some 200 Abka employees on site for the construction, but final hatchery personnel will be kept to a maximum of not more than 10 people. The processing plant for the meat and caviar is projected to employ some 80 people.

The complex will have a stocking station on the shoreline of the Caspian Sea and arrangements are being made with local fishermen to bring large sturgeon to the site for adding to the broodstock.

Firzlaff said that eventually it is planned to add carp and other wild-caught species to the processing program.

He added that equipment and materials for the project had already started to be amassed at Billund's main centre in Denmark in preparation for trucking to Turkmenistan for installation in the coming weeks.

Note: In a previous issue of Hatchery International credit for this project was mistakenly attributed to another European company based on erroneous information received by the publication. AquaFUTURE should have been credited for the project.