

EXCLUSIVE

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## THE BRAZILIAN AGRIBUSINESS ROUTE

GUIDED BY **ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**, THE SECTOR ADOPTS  
SUSTAINABLE TOOLS IN THE FIELD AIMING TO DELIVER QUALITY AND FOOD SAFETY  
TO MORE THAN 800 MILLION CONSUMERS WORLDWIDE

# REFERENCE IN TRIÂNGULO MINEIRO

COMPETITIVE AND WITH A LOOK THAT GOES FAR BEYOND THE FARM GATE, **R FISH** CONSOLIDATES ITSELF IN THE PRODUCTION OF TILAPIA THAT IS NOW ON THE LIST OF THE MOST DESIRED FISH IN THE REGION. THEIR OWN FEED PRODUCTION AND VACCINATION PROGRAM ARE SOME OF THE PILLARS OF THIS SUCCESS STORY

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**L**ocated on a peninsula at Triângulo Mineiro, R Fish carries a history of tradition in Brazilian agribusiness in its DNA. José Humberto Nascimento, owner of Realiza Agronegócios, made his name in the activity and is now a well-recognized entrepreneur in the region. This profile was passed on from father to son, and the continuity of the visionary way of looking at business was very well managed by Luiz Gustavo Nascimento.

R Fish was born from a simple question, remembers Luiz Gustavo. He tells us that his father once asked him if he knew anything about tilapia production. And from that conversation came his interest in researching more on the subject. There and then Luiz Gustavo was sure that

a new venture was about to come their way, "I realized that we were in a privileged place to raise tilapia".

With the perfect setting for fish farming, including location, the best water parameters for production and agile logistics, the company's project took shape, and thus was born the Fish Península, which would later become R Fish.

At the company, tracking raw materials and fingerlings is part of the company's conduct and contributes significantly to the quality and safety of the product. From the farm to the table, R Fish values food safety and bringing flavor and practicality to consumers in Triângulo Mineiro.

With a production that is 100% focused on the region, today R Fish, with six years of history, is a ref-





erence in fish farming in Uberlândia (MG). In all, there are 196 net tanks, 250 tons of fish per month and a feed production of 13 tons per day – which feeds 1.5 million tilapia.

Having their own feed production is an ally to this system, says owner Luiz Gustavo do Nascimento, since, in addition to bringing economic gains, it also has a positive impact on animal performance.

As Luiz Gustavo points out, proper diets are responsible for bringing this gain and are linked to production sustainability indices. At R Fish, this step is carefully monitored, precisely because the assertiveness of nutrition will also dictate the final product result. “We use a blend of essential amino acids, animal-based meal, plant-based meal and premix – the staple ingredients of the feed. And as a result, we have achieved very good efficiency,” he points out.

This gain in efficiency and competitiveness is the result of the company’s vertical integration plan. According to the owner, this system as a whole brought many benefits to R Fish, and provided “support and courage for production expansion.” Just to give you an idea, over a year and a half the company grew 300%, an accelerated and surprising expansion in such a short time: “The combination of all our processes has brought us here.”

Among the company’s many actions, vaccination is at the center of discussions. According to Luiz Gustavo, R Fish was one of the first tilapia companies to enter a vaccination program against Francisella in Brazil, and the disease is currently one of the main challenges in production: “The sanitary part keeps us awake

at night. And to overcome the challenges, we changed the way we produce, transferring the juveniles to the excavated nursery, with the goal of obtaining more efficient production and reducing mortality. Our aim is to reach 5% mortality or even 3%.”

Still in the learning curve in the excavated ponds production system, the main objective of this model’s strategy is greater control of health challenges, providing lower stocking density, complements the Aqua Products manager at Vaxxinova (animal health company), Santiago Padua. And he explains why. “Placing a juvenile in the river – which is more vulnerable to disease – together with a fattening animal, where there is a greater density of animals per square meter, and where naturally the greatest health challenges occur, is a principle of biosecurity that does not pay off down there (in the net tanks). Therefore, the division of the rearing phases into dif-

**FISH NUTRITION IS AN ESSENTIAL STEP FOR THE COMPANY.**

DIET CONSISTS OF BLENDS OF ESSENTIAL AMINO ACIDS, PLANT-BASED MEAL, ANIMAL-BASED MEAL AND PREMIX

**FEED EFFICIENCY AND COST REDUCTION ARE THE MAIN BENEFITS OF THE IN-HOUSE FEED MILL**

ferent production locations is key to achieving success in health control and better survival results.”

In addition to lower stocking density, this system provides superior environmental conditions and animal wellbeing, making the fish more resistant to diseases. Moreover, it also has the capacity to offer primary and secondary food production for the animals – the algae and zooplankton that are produced.

To provide support to the company’s protocols, Vaxxinova has been monitoring the farm’s production since 2019. In the first production diagnosis, the company’s specialists identified the presence of *Streptococcus agalactiae* serotype Ib, and in readiness they devel- ▶



“WE GREW 300% IN 18 MONTHS, SO IT IS TIME TO CONSOLIDATE THIS GROWTH AND FLY MUCH HIGHER”

**LUIZ GUSTAVO NASCIMENTO,**  
R FISH OWNER



oped a customized solution based on the bacteria found on the farm.

At the beginning of this partnership, Vaxxinova sold 50 thousand doses/month and that number doubled in three months. And now, the average is 300 thousand monthly doses. According to Padua, because *Francisella orientalis* is a winter disease, and there is no licensed commercial vaccine available on the market, the company introduced an autogenous vaccine program that combines *Francisella* with *Streptococcus* in the winter period.

This vaccination preparation starts with the arrival of the fingerlings on the farm. With a weight of 1 or 2 grams, the fish are transferred directly to the excavated ponds, thus allowing for greater survival conditions and better performance. When these animals reach the about 25 g to 30 g, they are transported to the net tanks. At this stage, they remain for a period of approximately 45 days, and will only be ready for vaccination after the adaptation time. “The system is now to vaccinate 100% at 50 g. We try to vaccinate at this weight, because we gain more efficiency and it is when there is greater protection. After this process, the fish are classified and moved to another net tank”, explains Luiz Gustavo.

The interval between net tanking and harvesting is around five months, says the owner. After this period, the fish leave the farm weighing 1 kg – a larger animal when compared to those offered in the market. Generally, he complements, the market works with fish weighing 850 - 900 g for filleting, because it considers it the best index. However, R Fish, owing to strategic decisions, raised the bar a little higher: “The food market values this bigger fish a lot more, and our growth story has been based on that. So, this made us competitive in the market, because our fish became a desired product.”

This feedback comes from within the slaughterhouses. According to Luiz Gustavo, what they hear about the company's fish has to do with the performance of the team at the time of processing, and also about better product carcass yield, “What determines carcass yield is not just the weight, it is the feeding system, proper handling, and water

**FROZEN TILAPIA FILLET** IS THE COMPANY'S MAIN PRODUCT AND IS SOLD IN THE 500 G AND 1 KG VERSIONS

**FISH ARE 100% VACCINATED** WITH 50 GRAMS. AND AT THIS STAGE, THE COMPANY COUNTS ON THE HEALTH PARTNERSHIP WITH VAXXINOVA, WHICH HAS MONITORED THE PROCESSES AND DELIVERED CUSTOMIZED SOLUTIONS



WITH 100% GENETICS FROM AQUAGENETICS DO BRASIL, FORMERLY AQUABEL, THE COMPANY AIMS AT HARVESTING ANIMALS WEIGHING 1 KG – MORE THAN WHAT THE MARKET OFFERS



(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) SANTIAGO PÁDUA FROM VAXXINOVA AND ANDRÉ BERNADINO FROM R FISH SHOWED ALL THE COMPANY'S PROCESSES, GUARANTEED BY STRICT AND QUALITY PROTOCOLS

quality. It is a combination, an equation, and not just one determining factor.”

This thought is part of Luiz Gustavo's concern about all production processes: “At the very end, there is also the after and, therefore, we value good partnerships.”

Incope slaughterhouse, located in Ponte Nova (MG), is part of this good relationship and is an extension of the work carried out at R Fish to maintain product safety and quality.

R Fish's filets, frozen and offered in two sizes, go through a rigorous process inside the facility. According to owner Leonardo Mello, three times a week a person in charge of the Instituto Mineiro de Agropecuária (IMA) prepares a report on the fish and products. Additionally, every three months, every

product of the company is sent to the agency to undergo *Salmonella* testing.

For Mello, vertical production is the future and producers who follow this path will be the ones who will remain in the market 10 years from now: “There will be no room for amateurs.”

Speaking of the future, Luiz Gustavo shares that the goal is precisely to consolidate verticalization at R Fish, reap the rewards, and from 2022 resume the growth plan. “We want to reach 300 t in 2023. Our area has the capacity to produce 3,000 t per month, that is, we have a long way to go. We grew 300% in 18 months, so it is time to consolidate this growth and fly much higher. We are even thinking about diversifying our production, betting big on the shrimp market.” ■