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# Agusan Marsh: A biodiversity asset

Aquaculture Department, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center

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Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, Aquaculture Department (1994). Agusan Marsh: A biodiversity asset. Aqua Farm News, 12(3), 9.

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# Agusan Marsh: a biodiversity asset

There are three major marshes in the Philippines: the Candaba Swamp in central Luzon, the Liguasan Marsh in western Mindanao and the Agusan Marsh in east central Mindanao. Much of the first has been drained and converted into rice fields and fish ponds. The second contains significant crocodile populations and has been accorded partial protected area status; the peace and order situation there provides options for conservation.

Included in the country's top ten sites under the protected areas system, the Agusan Marsh holds a great variety of wetland habitats. Besides numerous rivers and creeks, there are areas of floodplain lakes, herbaceous swamp, scrub swamp, freshwater swamp forest, peat swamp and mixed swamp forests with a thick

closed canopy where disturbance has been minimal.

Agusan Marsh is a refuge for large populations of the crocodiles *Crocodylus porosus* and *C. mindorensis* whose numbers have been reduced drastically elsewhere in the country.

A major reason for the high biodiversity in Agusan Marsh is that it includes both true wetland and terrestrial species. The thick swamp forests hold a high diversity of typically terrestrial birds, and the open water areas and the herbaceous marshes hold true wetland birds. Already, even with limited surveys, 102 species have been recorded, of which at least 20 are endemic to the Philippines.

The people living around Agusan Marsh depend on it for food and livelihood. Attractive options for increasing the income of the local people include deep-water rice cultivation and fish culture at the periphery of the Marsh.

Reference: J. Davies, *Agusan Marsh in the Philippines*, *Asian Wetland News*, Vol. 6, No. 2, December 1993.



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could affect the resource pending the establishment of objectives based upon appropriate knowledge and planning.

- **Natural biotic areas** - areas set aside to allow the way of life of societies living in harmony with the environment to adapt to modern technology at their pace. These societies include the:
  - *Indigenous cultural community*, a group of people sharing common bonds of language,

customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, and who have, since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized a territory.

- *Tenured migrant communities*, those that have actually and continuously occupied a protected area for five years and who are solely dependent therein for subsistence.
- **Other categories** established by law, conventions or international agreements of which the Philippine Government is a signatory.