

## Lake Ziway and its Fishery

- Poster -

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Monitoring of the commercial fishery has shown that the tilapia of Lake Ziway is heavily exploited. The production of tilapia has dropped from 2,800 tons in 1996 to 570 tons in 2000. The size at first breeding was estimated at 13.8 cm by Yared Tigabu, and Abe Mamo in 1996. This is lower than the 19 cm first estimated by Woldemjicheal Getaneh and Maria Getaneh in 1979 and the 18 cm estimated by Zenebe Tadesse in 1988. This could be the effect of increased fishing pressure. Tilapia is known to mature at smaller sizes when under pressure. Fishing with gill nets has dropped from an all time high of 270,000 net\*days to 8,784 net\*days as fishermen have shifted to other gears (e.g. long lines and beach seine) or have stopped fishing all together. One recent development on Lake Ziway is the appearance of a significant amount of *clarias gariepinus* in the landings. *Clarias gariepinus* is a recent accidental introduction. The proportions of *C.gariepinus* in the landings increased from 4.5 % to 53 %, i.e. from 97 tons in 1995 to 736 tons in 2001. This increase is a reflection of three different but linked processes. One is the gradual establishment of this species in its new environment. The second is the fact that fishermen learned how to build and use long lines, which are particularly used for *C.gariepinus*. The third is that a shift towards less valued species is expected in situations of overfishing of the prime target species that is tilapia. Up to now any intellectual or physical effort did not apply to stop the wrong course of the lake. Today, the situation has become so pressing that it can no longer be ignored.