

Yes, Dr Luu, SRS are important - especially to the rural poor!

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The overall study site selection for the SRS Project in Southeast Asia was based on the perception that the importance of such species would vary according to the degree to which the natural environment had been altered. Thus a spectrum of sites was chosen from Cambodia, where it was expected that SRS would be very important through the intermediate of Northeast Thailand to the highly manmade environment of the Red River Delta in Vietnam. When the idea of such a study in the Red River Delta was first discussed, the Country Manager of the AIT Aqua Outreach Program in northern Vietnam, Dr Le Thanh Luu was sceptical, believing that self-recruiting species could not possibly be of importance in such an environment. It was only after much persuasion that he agreed that the project might have some relevance in this context and his institute, the Research Institute for Aquaculture No.1, duly set up a research team.

In the north of Vietnam, as elsewhere, three study sites were chosen to represent the varying ecologies of the Delta: an area of low-lying riceland in Ha Tay province to the south of Hanoi City; a site on the riverside of the Red River in Hung Yen province; and a site on the margins of the delta (known as midland) in Soc Son district of Hanoi province, near the international airport. As elsewhere, the work began with Participatory Rural Appraisals conducted in three villages in each of the study sites. The following paragraphs describe the aquatic resources context of the three villages derived from the PRA studies.

In the three areas studied in northern Vietnam, in only one case were cultured species considered the most important. This was in the highly intensive area of horticulture in Van Giang district, Hung Yen province, just across the river from Hanoi. In the other two areas, the low-lying zone of Phu Xuyen district in Ha Tay province and in the northern margins of the delta in Soc Son district, self-recruiting species were regarded, overall, as more important.

Table 1: Main aquatic animal species, by order of importance, in each study site

Rank	Soc Son, Hanoi	Van Giang, Hung Yen	Phu Xuyen, Ha Tay
1	Shrimp =	Grass Carp	Shrimp
2	Crab	Silver Carp	Crab
3	Common Carp	Indian Carp	Silver Carp
4	Silver Carp =	Common Carp	Common Carp
5	Snakehead =	Snail	Carassius auratus
6	Freshwater Clam	Snakehead	Snakehead/Snail =

(= means equal rank with the species group which follows)

However, when broken down by socio-economic grouping, the situation becomes rather different. It will be seen that in general cultured fish are more important to the better-off groups, while self-recruiting species tend to be more important to the poorer. This difference is particularly pronounced in the higher area of Soc Son district, whereas in the low lying land of Phu Xuyen, self-recruiting species were still rather important even for the rich. Over the three districts, shrimp and crab were the most important species for the poor, followed by silver carp and snail; whereas grass carp, silver carp, common carp and Indian carp were the main species groups in descending order of importance for the rich.

Table 2: Main aquatic animal species by order of importance for groups of different socio-economic status in study sites

Rank	Soc Son		Van Giang		Phu Xuyen	
	Poor	Rich	Poor	Rich	Poor	Rich
1	Shrimp =	Silver Carp	Silver Carp	Grass Carp	Shrimp	Crab
2	Crab	Com. Carp	Snail	Indian Carp	Car. Auratus	Shrimp
3	Big FW Clam	Shrimp	Hemiculter Sp. =	Com. Carp =	Silver Carp =	Snakehead =
4	Snail	Crab	Indian Carp	Silver Carp	Crab	Silver Carp
5	Snakehead	Indian Carp =	Com. Carp =	Snakehead	Common Carp =	Snail/Small Wild/Grass Carp
6	Com. Carp	Snakehead	Crab =	Snail/Crab =	Anabas	

(= means equal rank with the species group which follows; Com. Carp = Common Carp; Car. Auratus = Carassius auratus)

There were also some differences by gender. In Van Giang, it was only poor women who ranked self-recruiting species highly; the lists of poor men and both rich men and women were dominated by cultured species. In Soc Son, cultured species only figured once in the ranking of both poor men and poor women, but amongst the better-off the top four species for men were all cultured, whereas shrimp, crab and snakehead were the most important for women. In Phu Xuyen the lists of men and women were rather similar.