

# Aquatic Health Information Brief: Malawi



## Summary information

### Customs and borders

#### 1. International airports (2):

- a. Chileka
- b. Kamuzu

#### 2. Official customs land border crossing points (6):

Songwe, Mchinji, Dedza, Mwanza, Biriwiri, Muloza.

#### 3. Coastal customs ports:

Not applicable.

#### 4. Import/Export procedures:

Import licenses are required. The importation of all animals and other animal products requires to be certified as "free from disease" (unclear specification) before importation. Live fish imports are inspected at airports by Department of Animal Health and Livestock Development, in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries. Permits are imposed on any import of live fish. Theoretically should be the same procedure at land border custom posts.

## Key contacts supporting national aquatic health management

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## Main fish pathogens and health conditions detected in Malawi

Reported detections include Cotton Wool Disease (Columnaris) – a bacterial infection due to stress in handling, mainly during fish transportation in hatcheries; EUS – caused by fungal pathogen *Aphanomyces invadans*, detected in a wild river population in one district after reported mortalities and first recorded in August 2020. Potential for a range of internal and ectoparasites and fungal *Saprolegnia sp.* infections of farmed indigenous tilapias and catfish in ponds throughout the country, and more prevalent in the hatchery sector where fish are cultured in higher densities

## Private sector background

Many donor-funded, government-backed projects have attempted to develop small-scale pond aquaculture, although it has not yet scaled. Maldeco are the largest commercial cage and hatchery producer (on Lake Malawi). A commercial RAS tilapia farm has been set-up on the outskirts of Blantyre. There are significant climate variations across the country, affecting the siting, systems and financial viability of aquaculture. Zambian-made feeds are imported and one small-scale commercial floating feed manufacturer has started in Lilongwe. The relatively low national production and commercialisation in the country means that aquatic animal health yet to be a significant problem for the majority of fish farmers. There is no recorded use of any vaccines, or use of any antibiotics or probiotics. The longstanding ban on introduction of live *Oreochromis niloticus* into the country for protection of the biodiversity of cichlids in Lake Malawi also reduces the risk of importing potentially serious fish pathogens from outside.

## Infrastructure and Legislation: FAQs

### 1. Does the government have a specialised unit for aquatic health?

No.

### 2. Are aquatic health diagnostics laboratories accessible and affordable to the majority of aquaculture farmers?

No. The government Central Veterinary Laboratory, in Lilongwe, has capacity to conduct squash method on level 1 and 2 of EUS disease, whilst definitive confirmation at level 3 (PCR) is done in at the University of Zambia laboratory. Contact: Dr Joseph Nkhoma Tel +265 884562763. No known private sector diagnostic laboratories involved in aquatic health in Malawi.

### 3. Does the government have any bans or limitation on introducing live fish into the country – or moving live fish within the country?

The ban on movements of wild fish from one particular district/water catchment area in Malawi was effected during the incidence of EUS in August 2020. There has been a longstanding ban on the importation of any strains of *Oreochromis niloticus* into the country in order to protect the biodiversity of indigenous cichlids within Lake Malawi.

### 4. Does the government have any specialist legislation on aquatic health?

A national Aquatic Animal Health (AAH) strategy is currently under development through the support of FAO. See further reading below.

### 5. Additional information – capacity development

In February 2022 the Enhanced Capacity for Aquatic Resources in Eastern and Southern Africa (ECARESA) project began, with the aim of developing the country's first M.Sc. in Aquatic Animal Health and Ecosystems Management, to be hosted by Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR). This is funded through NORHED II.

<https://vetpathology.uonbi.ac.ke/index.php/latest-news/inception-meeting-ecaresa-project-lilonwe-malawi>

## Further reading

### 1. Munthali M., 2021. The Epizootic Ulcerative Syndrome outbreak in fish is a threat to Malawi's Economy. Policy Perspectives: The Mwapata Institute. July 2021.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353306476\\_The\\_Epizootic\\_Ulcerative\\_Syndrome\\_outbreak\\_in\\_fish\\_is\\_a\\_threat\\_to\\_Malawi's\\_Economy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353306476_The_Epizootic_Ulcerative_Syndrome_outbreak_in_fish_is_a_threat_to_Malawi's_Economy)

### 2. Malawian Government, 2021. Malawi launches aquaculture policy documents. Press release: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition: National Aquaculture Strategic Plan (NASP II), SADC Aligned National Aquatic Animal Health & Biosecurity Strategy, Harmonized Aquaculture Training Manual, Success Stories in Aquaculture in Malawi and other Countries in SADC region. November 26 2021, Lilongwe.

<https://www.malawi.gov.mw/index.php/component/content/article/79-blog/164-malawi-launches-aquaculture-policy-documents>

### 3. FAO. 2009. What you need to know about epizootic ulcerative syndrome (EUS) – An extension brochure. Rome, FAO. 33pp.

[https://www.fao.org/fishery/docs/DOCUMENT/aquaculture/aq2008\\_09/root/i0777e.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fishery/docs/DOCUMENT/aquaculture/aq2008_09/root/i0777e.pdf)

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