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Rojas-Tirado, Paula; Åtland, Åse; Letelier-Gordo, Carlos

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The effect of different water sources on the potential H₂S-formation within RAS

Paula Rojas-Tirado^{1*}, Åse Åtland¹, Carlos Letelier-Gordo²

¹NIVA, Norwegian Institute for Water Research, Section for Aquaculture, Bergen, Norway; ²DTU Aqua, Technical University of Denmark, Hirtshals, Denmark

Abstract

In the last years, several of the serious incidents involving acute fish mortalities in recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), have been caused by hydrogen sulphide (H₂S). These incidents have mainly occurred in seawater systems, e.g. post-smolt production. H₂S is formed by sulphate-reducing bacteria which uses sulphate (SO₄²⁻) and organic material under anaerobic conditions. Seawater contains 1000 times more SO₄²⁻ than freshwater, increasing the potential risk for H₂S production. However, using seawater is pivotal to avoid desmoltification and preparing salmon for seawater transfer. The project where this preliminary study is from, propose removing sulphate from seawater through membrane filtration as a measure for reducing fish mortalities caused by H₂S.

The aim of this preliminary study was to understand what microbial environments in RAS have the highest potential risk for H₂S-formation and to gain a better understanding of the dynamic between organic material and sulphate concentration for H₂S formation in RAS-water.

Three main environmental sources where H₂S could potentially form in a commercial RAS were selected: sludge, biofilter elements and RAS-water. A small-scale batch experiment was conducted where each of these three potential sources were exposed to seawater and brackish RAS-water. The H₂S kinetics and production rate was measured for each test. The organic material was also measured in form of COD (chemical oxygen demand) and organic carbons as fatty acid. Anions such as NO³⁻ and SO₄²⁻ and other water quality parameters were assessed.

The results of this experiment are still under development and analysis. Therefore, the results will be presented at the 5th NordicRAS workshop.

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*paula.rojas@niva.no