By AP Surtida

If you live near a river, reservoir or bay, you can fence off a natural sheltered inlet and grow fishes or crabs. Make sure that you comply with the legal requirements (like a permit) in your locality.

The pen is usually made of low-cost bamboo. The area of the pen will depend on the contour of the land like the small farm in Indonesia shown on Figure 1. Here’s how to construct a pen:

1. Drive bamboo poles at least 20 cm into the pond bottom. Make sure the top of the fence is no less than 1 m above the highest water level.

2. Weave a fine mesh net into the bamboo fence to prevent fish from escaping. Use enough net to cover the fence from top to bottom.

3. At the bottom of the pen, dig a small pond and narrow channel to make fish harvest easy (Figure 2). Fish could also settle in this area when water level is low. The small pond and channel should gradually slope from 25 cm to about 50 cm—1m deep. The width depends on the width of the fenced bay.

4. After constructing the fence, small pond and channel, wait for the water to rise. Inquire from the local fishing agency when a high water level will occur, or consult a calendar with a predicted tide table.

When the water level rises, check the fence and nets for holes where fish could escape. If you wish to stock carps or tilapias, remove predatory species such as snakehead and catfish. A 10 x 50 m or 500 m² pen system is sufficient for 5,000 fingerlings sized 5-10 g.

To grow common carp and Nile tilapia together, stock one common carp and one Nile tilapia for every 2m². A pen measuring 100 x 50 m or 5,000 m² is sufficient to grow 2,500 common carp and 2,500 Nile tilapia.