

## Philippines government hopes to triple shrimp production by 2006

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS [Asia Pulse Pte Ltd] - October 10, 2005 - MANILA, The government has estimated that shrimp production in the Philippines will triple by next year once the study on *Peneus vannamei* (*P. vannamei*), also known as Pacific White shrimp, becomes successful.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) thru its attached agency the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) recently agreed to continue its research and verification studies on *P. vannamei* to broaden the country's aquaculture base and increase shrimp production.

BFAR Director Malcolm Sarmiento said he approved the conduct of another study to determine whether or not *P. vannamei* is safe to commercially produced here.

'Once proven that we can produce *P. vannamei* in Philippine waters, farmers are expected to triple their shrimp production,' he said.

BFAR recently aborted its study on the specie after commencing the project in December 2004.

Sarmiento said this developed after the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) discovered all *P. vannamei* brood stocks used in BFAR's experimental trials became infected with Hepatopancreatic Parvo Virus (HPV).

Experts however clarified HPV is not a new pathogen as this already existed in the country even prior to the research.

Based on their findings, the project proponent failed to sterilize HPV-infected oysters it sourced from Lingayen Gulf prior to feeding to the imported shrimp breeders.

'So the infection was acquired here since brood stocks imported for the project were free from diseases when tested upon arrival in the Philippines,' Sarmiento said.

Over 1,000 infected brood stocks were destroyed at the National Integrated Fisheries Technology Center (NIFTC) in Dagupan City where BFAR conducted its research study.

In the aborted research project, Sarmiento said BFAR used stocks which project proponent Agro-Fisheries World imported from Hawaii at a cost of about US\$35 each.

The BFAR official said it would implement stringent conditions in its second study to avoid committing another mistake.

*P. vannamei* grows faster than tiger prawns and requires less expensive low-protein food,

he said.

Four years ago, researchers in Hawaii were able to develop specific pathogen-free (SPF) and specific pathogen-resistant (SPR) strains of *P. vannamei*.

Sarmiento explained that the SPF strain is certified as having no pathogens while the SPR strain has the added advantage of being resistant to the deadly Taura Syndrome Virus (TSV).

He said the Philippines can gain if it can produce *P. vannamei* since US consumers, which comprise the world's biggest shrimp market, are increasingly preferring *P. vannamei* over other species.

'They appear to prefer its taste over our local 'sugpo' called *P. monodon*,' Sarmiento said.

He said there is also strong demand for *P. vannamei* in Taiwan, Thailand and mainland China, the world's biggest producer of this shrimp species with a yield of over 300,000 metric tons (MT) in 2003 alone.

*P. vannamei* production is also booming in the US, Venezuela and Brazil.

(C) 2005 Asia Pulse Pte Ltd.

Ken Coons

## Shrimpers face another tough year in Carolinas

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS [Myrtle Beach Sun News] - October 10, 2005 - As Tropical Storm Tammy tore through the Grand Strand last week, shrimp boats stayed tied for another day at the docks at Independent Seafood in Georgetown.

Glennie Tarbox, whose family has owned the historic seafood house near Front Street for decades, said the combination of bad weather, high fuel costs and the damage done to seafood buyers on the Gulf Coast have combined to make another bad year for the local shrimping industry.

Some shrimping experts in the Carolinas say this year, another in a long-lasting unlucky streak, could spell the end to the traditional livelihood along the coast.

'It sure shuts us down,' Tarbox said of the blustery weather. 'The shrimpers are really catching a fit because of the high cost of fuel and bad weather. It's [the shrimping season] has been a dud; the weather has kept the big boats in.'

The commercial shrimping season in South Carolina opened June 15 and will remain

open until midwinter, depending on shrimp catches and the weather. North Carolina has year-round shrimping.

Lowcountry fishermen already struggling with rising fuel costs, weak catches and flat prices say the shrimping industry is being swallowed up in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The storm all but wiped out the large-scale packing houses and processing plants in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, where most American shrimp are caught and where half the Lowcountry catch is sold.

The local shrimping industry has been in decline since 2001; this year, far fewer large trawlers are making their way out to sea, said officials with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources.

While tariffs on foreign imports have helped boost prices for local catch, some fear the traditional industry in South Carolina soon will be wiped out, said Larry DeLancey, a DNR fisheries biologist.

The supply of shrimp is not an issue this year, as it has been in past years, DeLancey said.

Finding a place to sell them, or buying the gas for a shrimp trawler, is another matter.

The large boats can hold about 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel. The shrimpers get a slight discount, but diesel fuel across the Carolinas was selling for about \$3 a gallon this week.

In Holden Beach, N.C., Travis Elliott, owner of Capt. Pete's Seafood, was facing similar problems. The brown shrimp did not appear this year. He is hoping for a good season for white shrimp.

Tropical Storm Tammy stopped shrimp boats from leaving the docks, he said.

'They risk tearing up their boats and somebody getting hurt,' he said. 'The weather has been bad this summer.'

Elliott said this is the worst year for shrimpers in recent memory. The small, family-owned business has been in Holden Beach for 25 years.

'The white shrimp are just now starting,' he said. 'You don't know if the rain will run them out of the backwater or not. In a normal year, they regulate themselves. They filter out [to the ocean] little by little. When we get a lot of rain, it makes a very short season, because everything is caught at once.'

Katrina struck as Lowcountry white shrimp - the bigger, more sought-after fall catch - had begun to grow and fill the nets.

Few Lowcountry shrimp boats were going out before Katrina. Fewer have been out this

week. The word is, they're just bringing back the bigger shrimp to sell off the dock.

'To what degree our industry is damaged or destroyed, we really don't know for sure, yet. It's severe,' said John Williams, of the Southern Shrimp Alliance. 'Just like any other industry, we don't know how long it will even take to assess all the damage. We've never faced this kind of situation before.'

#### Industry in decline

The industry was crippled by prices before the storm, said Howard Johnson, a seafood-business analyst.

The lower price of imported shrimp year by year has eaten into a business that for generations was a mainstay of the Lowcountry and remains one of its emblems.

In 2003, the United States sold 195 million pounds of heads-off shrimp; Asia sold 1.5 billion pounds.

Clay Cable, of the South Carolina Shrimpers Association, said the group is trying to build its own packing and processing plant - a move that could establish a year-round market and bolster prices for the Lowcountry catch.

'But that takes money, a lot of money,' he said. 'It's right at the tipping point right now, and I think the fuel price rising is going to tip us over,' said Frank Blum, of the S.C. Seafood Alliance.

'I've heard two or three reports that they are catching a lot of shrimp, but it's easier to get the shrimp than it is to sell them,' DeLancey said. 'I'm sure they are trying to sell them locally.'

DeLancey referred to a 'few glimmers of hope' for this year's commercial season.

The price paid to shrimpers for small shrimp is better this year, he said.

The shrimpers got about 85 cents a pound last year. This year, small shrimp are being sold for about \$2 a pound.

Foreign imports have decreased this year, DeLancey said. At the same time last year, 501,241 pounds of imported shrimp reached the United States.

Consumers are paying about the same amount, about \$7 a pound, for large-size shrimp, he said.

Shrimpers are getting about \$4 a pound for large shrimp. In 2001, the price paid for large shrimp was about \$6.25 a pound, DeLancey said.

The number of licenses issued for commercial shrimpers has been declining since 2001, he said.

Fewer than 500 commercial trawlers hold state licenses, a number that has dropped by more than a third in less than five years.

'I think we're gone, really,' said Thomas Backman, of Backman Seafood on James Island. 'I'm going to lock the boat beside the dock. You're not going to make a penny a day and you'd better not break down.'

Copyright ©2004 Myrtle Beach Sun News. All Rights Reserved.