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ICLARM TO OPEN NEW PACIFIC REGIONAL AQUACULTURE CENTRE

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Following on the successful conclusion of negotiations with the Government of Solomon Islands (GSI) and the Guadalcanal Provincial Government (GPG), ICLARM is proceeding with development of a new regional Coastal Aquaculture Centre.

The site of the new Centre is on the northwest coast of Guadalcanal Island, about 20 km from Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands. The 4.8 ha site is to be leased for 50 years from the GSI at a token annual rental of SI\$1.00.

The initial focus of the Centre will be on the development of a pilot-scale giant clam hatchery to test and refine hatchery and nursery techniques and to provide seed for growing out under the wide range of environmental conditions offered by the Solomon Islands. This will be one of ICLARM's contributions to the International Giant Clam Mariculture Project. However, plans are also being considered for research on a wide variety of other organisms, including various fishes, crustaceans, molluscs and algae.

The Solomon Islands were selected for the site of the Centre for a number of reasons, including their location near to the geographical centre of diversity of Indo-Pacific marine organisms, the extremely wide range of marine habitats available within the Solomon Islands (ranging from deep fjords to coral atolls) and the availability of reasonably good communications, air services and technical facilities in Honiara.

The development of the Giant Clam Hatchery will be a collaborative undertaking between ICLARM and the GSI Department of Fisheries. A counterpart staff member will be provided by the GSI, plus some items of equipment and supporting services. The Provincial Government will provide assistance in initial site clearing. There is provision in the agreement for the giant clam hatchery facilities of the Centre to be sub-leased at a token rental to a commercial company owned by the GSI and GPG, in the event that at some future date all parties agree that the operation of the hatchery on a commercial basis is economically viable.

Initial support for the construction of the hatchery has been provided by the California-based Skaggs Foundation and the Australia and Pacific Science Foundation. The Overseas Development Administration of the United Kingdom has seconded Mr. Graham Usher, a mariculture specialist, to ICLARM for three years to undertake the initial development and has also provided a vehicle and some budgetary support for salaries and travel. Core funds provided by the Australian Development Assistance Bureau to ICLARM has been reserved by ICLARM for support of activities in the South Pacific Region including those of the Centre. Funds were also provided by the Government of New Zealand in support of the preparatory phase leading to development of the new Centre. ICLARM's Director for the South Pacific region, Dr. John Munro, is responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the Centre.

1