



# aquaculture

## beche-de-mer

## News from ICLARM, Coastal Aquaculture Centre in the Solomon Islands

*prepared by Stephen Battaglène*

The sea cucumber project at the CAC is entering the last year of a five-year program to develop techniques for the mass-production of tropical sea cucumbers. Major achievements during the first five-year phase of the program include:

- Assessment of the reproductive cycle of sandfish. Results show that it spawns all year round with a peak in activity from September to November.
- The development of techniques for transporting sandfish and inducing them to spawn. Sandfish can be induced to spawn year-round.
- Demonstration that wild adult sandfish can be held, and conditioned to spawn, in land-based tanks.
- Establishment of an algal unit and identification of optimal micro-algal diets for larval rearing of sandfish.
- Development of hatchery systems for rearing larval sandfish through to settlement.
- Successful settlement, detachment and grading of juvenile sandfish in plate culture systems.
- Production of juvenile sandfish of up to 250 mm in length in land-based nursery systems.
- To date, seven successful hatchery trials have been conducted with sandfish, resulting in production of more than 200 000 juveniles.
- Assessment of ponds as a potentially cost-effective means of on-growing juvenile sandfish.

My colleagues, Dr Annie Mercier and Dr Jean-Francois Hamel provide further details of the ICLARM programs investigating tropical sea cucumbers. Both ICLARM, and the specialist Advisory Panel of Australian scientists to the project, are confident that the basic techniques now exist to produce juvenile sandfish in large numbers at reasonable cost for the purpose of restocking and stock enhancement. All parties involved in the project now feel that it is appropriate to proceed to the second phase of this strategic research, i.e., identification of strategies for optimizing the survival of released juveniles. ICLARM will be approaching donors over the next six months and hope to start the second phase in January 2000.

Unfortunately, the news from the Solomon Islands is not all good. There have been civil disturbances since the beginning of the year due to ethnic tension between two groups from the islands of Malaita and Guadalcanal. Long-held tribal differences and problems with land rights have seen a mass exodus of Malaitians from the capitol Honiara. A declared 'State of Emergency' last month precipitated the temporary closure of many businesses, schools and roads. The CAC located some 25 km from Honiara has had to curtail research until things return to normal, hopefully in the near future. In the meantime I have relocated back to Australia and will continue to write up the results of the study.

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