Proceedings of the National Seaweed Planning Workshop

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Editors

SOUTHEAST ASIAN FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT CENTER
Aquaculture Department

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held on August 2-3, 2001
SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department
Tigbauan, Iloilo

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Tigbauan, Iloilo, Philippines
April 2002

ISBN 971-8511-57-1

Published and printed by:
Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center
Aquaculture Department
Tigbauan, Iloilo, Philippines

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FOREWORD

Seaweed forming is one of the major livelihoods among coastal communities in the Philippines, particularly to some 180,000 families in the Sulu Archipelago. In 1999, the Philippines exported more than 35,000 tons of dried seaweeds (US$ 44M) making the country the 4th largest producer of seaweeds and 8th largest producer of carrageenan in the world. However, improper post-harvest management (i.e. cleaning; drying by salting or steaming; adulteration of seaweeds with sand, dust, and dirt for added weight; storage; and baling) reduces quality, which eventually dictates the market price.

The National Seaweed Planning Workshop was organized by a collaborative effort of SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department (AQD) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) for the formulation of a Code of Practice for the Seaweed Industry in order to minimize industry malpractices and to sustain its position in the international market.

The National Seaweed Planning Workshop invited several seaweed industry associations, and representatives from the government, NGOs and academic and research organizations conducting seaweed research and development to discuss the research and development programs of the different participating agencies, identify and validate problems and concerns of the seaweed industry, and agree on strategies of solving problems in seaweed farming like disease management, post-harvest facilities and research funding. This proceedings documents the National Seaweed Planning Workshop. Hopefully, the contributions would help in the drafting of the Code of Practice in attaining a sustainable seaweed industry.

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April 2002

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BACKGROUND OF THE WORKSHOP

In the Philippines, more than 600 species of marine macrobenthic algae belonging to three major groups- Chlorophyta, Phaeophyta, and Rhodophyta, have been reported. Of the more than 600 species reported in the Philippines, 365 species have been documented to be economically important. Depending on their species, they may be used as food, as a sources of agarophytes, carrageenophytes, alginophytes, and others.

In 1990, the total seaweed production was 51M tons. At present, 14 companies are engaged in the processing and manufacture of carrageenans. These enterprises form the base of the seaweed industry with equipment assets of more than US$36M in 1990 which provided employment to more than 10,000 personnel.

The seaweed industry is not without problems. Despite encouraging information, the growth of the seaweed industry in the Philippines has not reached its maximum potential. In one seaweed meeting attended by researchers, entrepreneurs, government and non-government officials, the need for an integrated, wholistic program for the entire seaweed industry was articulated. Thus, the planning workshop on the role of the different sectors in the seaweed industry was organized to put together a national seaweed program to address the problems of the seaweed industry. Specifically, it aimed to assess industry practices, identify problems and remedial measures, and identify projects to solve problems related to the industry in farming systems, export/processing, government thrusts, and research.