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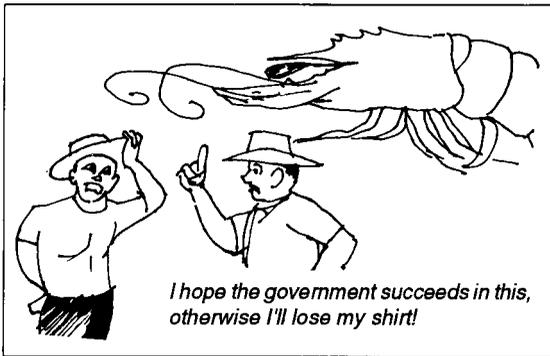
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The Oplan Sagip-Sugpo



By J. Carreon-Lagoc

OPLAN SAGIP-SUGPO TASK FORCE was the subject of a Special Order issued September 16, 1996 by Philippine Agriculture Secretary Salvador Escudero. The objectives: to hasten the rehabilitation of the shrimp culture industry, and to set the R&D direction of shrimp health management and production aspects. Shrimp, *sugpo* or *lucon*, if you will, is the common name for *Penaeus monodon*.

The task force has a wide representation of agencies involved in the development of the shrimp industry. Fittingly, it is chaired by Dr. Rolando Platon, Chief of AQD, the institution that pioneered in shrimp culture research.

In the '70s and '80s, the tiger shrimp industry was deemed a sunshine industry. Production increased a hundred-fold and thousands got employed in allied industries such as feed milling and processing. AQD was hailed for the technologies that boosted the industry.

Why the SOS call? Because at present, the Philippine *sugpo* industry is in the doldrums. From a peak 30,462 tons with a value of P7.46 billion in 1991, *sugpo* export has dipped to about 20,000 tons in 1995. Entrepreneurs were dismayed by the decline in production, and the opportunity lost. In Negros Occidental, for instance, a number of *sugpo* farms have ceased operation due to the prevalence of the dreaded luminous bacteria. The disease results in almost total mortalities in shrimp ponds throughout the country.

The present problems in the *sugpo* culture industry have been blamed on overintensification

of culture operations (see preceding articles). Shrimp farms which stocked 300,000-500,000 fry per ha produced effluents that exceeded the capacity of the natural environment to degrade and render harmless. The result: deterioration of the soil and water quality within the *sugpo* farm and its vicinity. Fish diseases and mortalities eventually ensued.

Oplan Sagip-sugpo consists of technical people from various agencies working on shrimp diseases and production problems. BFAR Director Dennis Araullo believes this would lead to unified and concerted efforts at rehabilitating the country's *sugpo* farms.

The task force's immediate strategy is to conduct "fire-fighting" operation "to greatly minimize the risk involved in *sugpo* farming and make it profitable and financially attractive once again." Practices reported to have been successful will be documented, evaluated and verified such as the use of probiotics, greenwater, reservoir, biofiltration, and other methods.

The long-term strategy is to develop specific disease resistant strains of *sugpo* through genetics, selective breeding, or through biotechnology in general. This will entail 6-10 years of research work.

Dr. Platon's team in the task force is composed of Celia Pitogo, AQD fish health expert; Dr. Arnulfo Marasigan, head of University of the Philippines Visayas - Institute of Aquaculture; Director Rolando Edra of PCAMRD; Roselyn Usero of NPPMCI fish health laboratory (see page 28); Dr. Tereso Abella, Dean of the Central Luzon State University-College of Fisheries; Simeona Aypa, BFAR Chief; and Dr. Quintin Bautista, a professor at the Mindanao State University-Naawan. On-call basis are personnel from the Department of the Agriculture regional offices.

Mr. Entrepreneur must know that the government cares, and cares deeply so that the tiger shrimp, once a huge dollar earner for the country, would again be a major export to rake in the green bucks. The once sunshine industry must shine again. We need pillars to establish Philippines 2000, and the succulent shrimp is one of them.