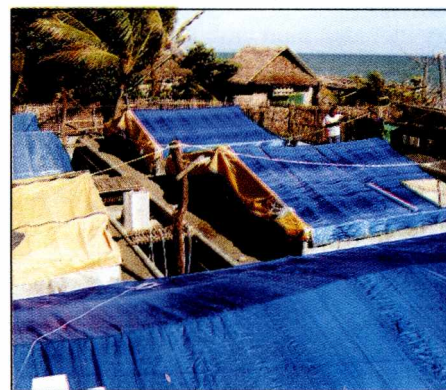


Rock Balacanta inspects his shrimp stock. His hatchery is typical of a small-scale backyard shrimp hatchery in the Philippines



A slump in the industry in the mid-'90s due to disease outbreaks forced Rock to stop operation for a couple of years. At present, he has three hatcheries running. Spawners come from Negros Occidental and Capiz. Fry sold in nearby areas cost ₱0.12 per piece while growers from Mindanao pay ₱0.25 apiece due to the chartered flight. Payments are prompt, some even in advance. Hatchery personnel get 35% of the sales after deduction of expenses.

Others say that the risk of operating right now is high because of marketing problems. But Rock responds that this is no longer true. There is more demand than he can produce. If there is a problem it would be the lack of *Artemia* supply.

With a batting average of 100%, Rock hopes that the trend he is experiencing will continue. He further hopes that a solution to disease problems is underway because only then can the industry be fully revived. ###

The “Rock” in shrimp hatchery business

By **RY Buendia**

In the 1.5 km coast of Buyu-an, Tigbauan, Iloilo where SEAFDEC is located, more than 20 backyard hatcheries operated during the shrimp boom years in the '80s. Some of SEAFDEC's research aides, technicians, and managers even resigned just so they can manage their own hatcheries.

The popularity of the business also attracted Sherlito “Rock” Balacanta, a hardworking SEAFDEC employee and dedicated family man. Although a research technician, he would often join in overtime jobs in other offices. Rock extensively discussed his plans of putting up a hatchery, asking officemate friends about the business. He made his first actual run when

a friend gave him some discarded nauplii. From these, Rock produced 200,000 fry in two 2-ton tanks lent to him by another friend.

His break came in November 1988 when he was hired as technician of MNCLD Prawn Hatchery in Bongol, Guimbal, Iloilo. He was so successful in MNCLD that many newly built hatcheries hired him as partner/consultant. Soon enough, Rock was able to build his own hatchery. A half-million pesos income from one of his harvests gave him solid financial footing. He opened other hatcheries and became one of the most successful operators.