

Collaborative APEC Grouper Research and Development Network

This project represents the second year of activities and funding under FWG 01/99 - Collaborative APEC Grouper Research and Development Network which was approved by APEC FWG in 1998 for a three year period, January 1999 to January 2001.

Overall the 3 year program seeks to provide a management framework that networks all of the economies of APEC with the network to maximise the effort and expenditure on research activities and reduce duplication of effort. The result being development of a sustainable grouper aquaculture industry and a means of addressing the issues of destructive and illegal practices for live reef and aquarium fish species.

The enormous demand and high prices that live reef fish species attract has encouraged the development of ecologically unsound fishing practices using cyanide and explosives, with devastating consequences for some of the world's most productive reefs. Wild-harvest fisheries for live reef fish are largely over-exploited or unsustainable, and increasing demand for grouper can be met through aquaculture production. Groupers are currently cultured in south-east Asia, however, production from live fish is somewhat unreliable, largely dependent on wild-caught juveniles which is unsustainable, and grow-out feeds for groupers contain a large component of trash fish, which is in itself a limited resource.

The objectives of the project are to:

1. Through the development of a regional research network develop the capacity to establish a sustainable grouper aquaculture industry which will benefit all collaborating economies.
2. Provide an alternative source of income / employment to people currently engaging in dangerous and illegal fishing practices.
3. Protect endangered reefs and reef fish from the pressures of illegal and dangerous fishing practices.
4. Develop a new aquaculture industry with significant export potential and economic benefit to a diversity of stakeholders.
5. Reduce substantially the current reliance on wild-caught fingerlings for aquaculture purposes because capture of wild fish is probably unsustainable, and is sometimes carried out using destructive fishing techniques which can have significant impact on the status of reef fish stocks.

This project is somewhat different to the traditional APEC project approach as it involves critical collaborative research in all participating economies and Network of Aquaculture Centres in the Asia-Pacific (NACA). The reasoning behind the development of this approach with NACA is to facilitate progress in research through cooperation. Prior to the project commencing, research in aquaculture experienced limited success in breeding and larval rearing because research groups were isolated and not well coordinated.

The Collaborative APEC Grouper Research and Development Network is a three year project approved by APEC FWG in 1998. This project represents an application for ongoing establishment of the network in its second year as well as undertaking a range of priority research activities identified at a recent meeting of the network in Medan, Indonesia. Priority research activities include improving coastal livelihoods, improving environmental management of cage aquaculture and options for formalising public-private network support.

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