



Prawn farming - great catch, jobs, and development

Seafarms Group has big plans for farming prawns – including a giant new farm in the Northern Territory to service the massive export markets of Asia.

Seafarms Group and the Australian Government are working to solve the pressing issue of mortality rates in farmed prawns – which can be as high as 85 per cent. Together, they are identifying the prevalence of various virus strains in prawn stocks to help combat the potential threat of viruses in prawn farming processes.

If Seafarms continue to find innovative ways to improve prawn production survival, it will make significant increases to yields and profitability.

Seafarms' land-based, environmentally sustainable prawn farming operations are located among the pristine waterways in North Queensland, just off Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Seafarms' new farms planned for Legune Station, Northern Territory, will follow similar world-class standards as its Queensland operations and will end up producing more than 100,000 tonnes of premium quality prawns per year for export markets.

Improving survival by understanding the prevalence and load of pathogens in both farmed animals and the environment can assist Seafarms in driving improved yields. Developing operating processes and biosecurity protocols around known endemic pathogens will assist Seafarms to improve yield and profitability.

Features

- Seafarms operates 160 hectares of grow-out ponds, a hatchery and processing plant across four sites in North Queensland – near Cardwell, Ingham and Innisfail.
- Production of Crystal Bay® Prawns and Crystal Bay Tiger Prawns has grown from 600 tonnes in 2013 to 1800 tonnes just four years later – a massive 43 per cent annual growth.
- Project Sea Dragon is the development of a new prawn farm at Legune Station, Northern Territory, with 1120 hectares of grow-out ponds, to produce Black Tiger prawns for China, Japan, Korea and Europe markets.



The finished product weighing 30 grams

- Project Sea Dragon will involve world-best practice science and research, intending to create pathogen-free broodstock, with a 35,000 megalitre fresh water dam at Legune Station.
- Legune will ultimately contain as many as 27 farms, enabling the business to produce more than 100,000 tonnes of premium quality prawns per year for export markets, mainly the valuable Asian markets.
- Seafarms currently employs 120 staff with 200-plus years of aquaculture experience.
- Project Sea Dragon, at full production, will create a further 1700 jobs, including Indigenous engagement opportunities for local communities.

How the Government has helped

An Innovation Connections project has brought Seafarms and James Cook University (JCU) together to develop methods of identifying and reducing viruses in their prawn farms.

The JCU research team and Seafarms have developed a better understanding of how to combat the potential threat of viruses in prawn farming processes. Seafarms is now better able to identify the prevalence of various virus strains in prawn stocks, and has also identified other factors in the environment that contribute to viral outbreaks in prawns, such as potential carriers.

JCU's AquaPATH Laboratory is licensed by the Queensland Government to test for prawn white spot disease.



Breeding tanks

Seafarms has assisted JCU to achieve NATA accreditation for its laboratory processes in the field of veterinary testing. This recognises the university's capability and capacity to provide ongoing support to aquaculture industries in northern Australia, supporting further growth in this industry.

The additional capability has given JCU the evidence and experience needed to successfully apply for other grants, including training funding from the CSIRO Fisheries Research and Development Corporation Aquatic Animal Health Biosecurity program and a grant from the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA).

James Cook University has since commenced an additional and related Innovation Connections project with a new industry partner.

Further information

Innovation Connections forms part of the Entrepreneurs' Programme. Innovation Connections is a facilitation service that provides expert advice and solutions on knowledge-related issues, and a brokering service to connect businesses with knowledge providers and research organisations. This may include access to matched funding grants to assist with direct access to research capability to work on identified research projects.

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