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Current status of bivalve farming in Sri Lanka

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Bivalve Molluscs such as oysters, mussels, scallops, clams and cockles comprise a significant part of the world's fisheries production. According to the statistics of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), over 14 million metric tons of bivalves are produced annually through aquaculture. China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and Thailand are the pioneers in the market. During the decade from 2000 to 2010, a rapid increase was seen in the production of bivalves and landing doubled from 7 million MT in 2000 to more than 14 million MT in 2010. During this period bivalves landing from the wild increased slightly from 2.5-3.5 million MT while cultured bivalves doubled during the same period increasing from 6.3 -14 million MT comprising nearly 75% of the world bivalve production. Sri Lanka is a South Asian Tropical Island in the Indian Ocean. It has total land area of 65610 km^2 with a population of 22 million, coastal line of the island about 1340 Km with 158,000 ha of brackish water areas (lagoon and estuaries). The country is very rich in economically important bivalves such as oysters (*Crassostrea madrasensis, Saccostrea cucullata*) mussels (*Perna viridis, P perna*), clams (*Marcia opima, M. hiantina, Meretrix casta*) cockles (*Gafrarium tumidum, Anadara granosa*) and pearl oysters (*Pinctada vulgaris, P. margaritifera*) around the coastal areas. Fishermen harvest bivalves from natural habitats in Negombo, Chilaw, Kalpitiya, Mannar, Jaffna, Trincomalee and Southern coastal belt of the country. Though bivalve farming is not commonly practiced in the country, a very high potential is available in the above specified areas. However, with the booming of the tourism industry in coastal areas of Sri Lanka, an attractive marketing atmosphere in other countries, the community based bivalve farming has started in many parts of the country through government initiation. Bottom, rack, stake and raft culture systems are used for the farming of oysters, mussels and clams in these areas. Naturally available untapped bivalves, unpolluted marine water, cheaply available culture materials, low cost labour availability of technology and government support are also encouraging factors for investment in bivalve farming in Sri Lanka.

Biography

W M T B Wanninayake (Senior Marine Biologist) formerly served as Professor of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka and Chairman, Ocean University of Sri Lanka. He is a former Senior Researcher of the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), Colombo. He earned his BSc in Zoology and MPhil in Aquaculture (Crustacean Research) from the University of Kalaniya, Sri Lanka and PhD in Bivalve Research from the University of Liverpool, United Kingdom. He contributed immensely in developing the prawn farming industry and hatchery sector in Sri Lanka. He has been recognized for introducing oysters, mussels, clams and cockles farming in Sri Lanka and is also a pioneer in introducing pearl culture in freshwater reservoirs. He is a Founder Member of the Asian Fisheries Forum (AFS) and Sri Lanka Association for Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (SLAFAR). He has wide experience and a profound understanding of aquaculture and aquatic environment in many European and Asian countries. Currently, he serves in advisory capacity to few ministries related to his work in Sri Lanka.

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