



Queensland Crayfish Farmers Association Inc.

QCFA

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SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO JSCNA

The case for Redclaw Aquaculture development in Regional North Australia

- Redclaw farming has a low environmental footprint.
- It does not require arable land, in fact quite the opposite is the case.
- While a reasonably large amount of water is required to be available, it can be recycled from a holding dam or used for irrigation thus having a “zero discharge” status.
- There are no “run off” issues
- The diet required is largely grain based and does not require fishmeal, of which there is a global shortage.
- Redclaw is a native Australian animal and not an introduced species. In Northern Queensland in particular, much of the area is the natural range of redclaw, Northern Territory has a slightly genetically different strain.
- Existing long term family run farms have proved to be successful.
- Redclaw is a high protein, high value product
- Domestic and international demand is strong – prices are good
- The current industry is maturing, and there is an active industry Association.

Answers to three critical questions

Q - Ms Landry - What are the biggest holdups to expanding the industry?

Overcoming the reputation gained by the industry in the early days:

- Inexperienced farmers allowing poor quality product onto the market place.
- Initially, as it was unknown and unproven, redclaw brought a very poor and uncertain price
- Ill-advised and under financed unsuccessful farms
- Farming practice was in the experimental stage
- Low percentage of successful farms
- Seen as a poor investment by financial institutions

More research on both scientific and practical levels is required:

- Availability of proven feed and feeding regime –(JCU Research project nearing completion)
- Survival and health – solving handling stress mortality (JCU research project in progress)
- Development of a strong, light, suitable, easily transportable, cheap habitat.
- Research project to establish animal behaviour in the ponds
- Streamlining labour intensive areas of farming – eg robotic feeder; materials handling

Raising industry profile:

- Recognised as necessary by industry leaders in 2012 – “Operation Kickstart” initiative
- 2013 – 2015:- Website; conference; workshops; publications; research levy; research program
- Initiative has been a success as witnessed by response, but needs continued effort to ensure results
- Promotion of feasibility of large scale farms – Scoping Analysis and Economic Model
- Redclaw farming is a very young industry in Australia and as such lacks a multitude of proven examples of success. Established and proven successful farming practice has had no opportunity to be showcased on a large scale.

Marketing:

- Currently the great majority of redclaw are sold as a live product. The only real reason for this is tradition.
- Individual farmers have successfully marketed processed redclaw over the years.
- Several centralised marketing arrangements have been tried over the life of the industry, all proving unsuccessful. The main reasons for this was lack of consistent supply.
- A central marketing organisation that was also a processing facility would provide a ready market for farms of all sizes and be in a position to manage the development of the market as the industry grows, in an efficient manner.

Q – Mr Snowden – What are the challenges to starting a redclaw farm?

The initial outlay is significant. Return on investment cannot be expected for 2-3 years

Site selection can have hurdles on practical and regulatory levels

Suitable water quality and supply is critical

Efficient predator control cannot be overlooked

Matching production to marketing until the farm is producing consistent supply can be difficult.

Prospective farmers should seek advice from QCFA

Q - Sen. Macdonald – Why not out west where people need to diversify?

The short answer to “Why not” is probably the reluctance of people to try something new. There is of course the freight cost issue, but this applies to any remote operation.

There has been a successful redclaw farm operating near Julia Creek for some years. There was a theory that the cold weather in winter nights would be a barrier, but this farmer used the artesian water naturally available at 130 degrees to keep the ponds warm at night. This same water needs no pumping and therefore there is a significant power saving. The water has a low salt content and improves the taste of redclaw - a high profile Brisbane chef deemed redclaw from this farm the best he had ever tasted.

Redclaw farming is an inland operation not coastal. This eliminates the majority of the heartache often experienced in obtaining approvals for an aquaculture operation

The value of tourism cannot be understated. For example, the Savannah Way attracts thousands of travellers all keen to experience local produce. This is a market untouched by the redclaw industry

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