

BLUEFIN



SEAFOODS *Pty Ltd*

Submission No.	17
Date Received	14-4-05

ABN 90 063 023 807
PO BOX 426
HERVEY BAY 4655. QUEENSLAND,
AUSTRALIA

Email: bluefins@optusnet.com.au

Hervey Bay Office
Phone: 07 4124 2771 Fax: 07 4124 2771

RECEIVED
14 APR 2005

Saturday, 26 March 2005

BY: ATSLA

Attention: The Secretary
Standing Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House

Dear Sirs,

My company has 1 of 3 Sea-cucumber Hatcheries in the world producing Sea-cucumber (often called Trepanng or Beche-de-mer). It is a Chinese delicacy considered 'The Ginseng Of The Sea', due to it's highly nutrient & medicinal value.

One of the primary purposes of us establishing this Seafood Hatchery was to re-stock costal Indigenous Communities waters and The Pacific areas. We are now in our 2nd year of production, producing over 500,000 juveniles (baby sea-cucumbers) each year for re-stocking, as well as producing in excess of 600,000 crablets (Blue Swimmer and Mud Crab).

We already hold a wild harvest license in this fishery but have been increasingly concerned over it's depletion especially in coastal areas where it is easily harvested. The writer has approached many Aboriginal Communities and find much interest in Joint Venture Operations to propagate and harvest this resource. However due to grey areas in legislation starts to these projects are blocked by State Fisheries in the Northern Territory & Western Australia, due to the fact one company holds all wild harvest sea-cucumber permits and will not allow aquaculture of sea-cucumber to proceed on it's wild harvest areas.

Communities such as Anindilyakaw Land Council (Groote Island – Northern Territory), Kalumburu Aboriginal Corp. (Western Australia), Bawinang Aboriginal Corp. (Northern Territory) and Quandamooka Lands Council (Queensland) – all of whom have expressed interest. I am also a Fisheries Consultant for the Gurang Land Council & Torres Strait Regional Authority. We are not asking for funding, simply the wish to do joint ventures with communities that wish to embark on seeding and harvest programs, to develop a very profitable and sustainable business through aquaculture.

Shortly we wish to buy the 5 acre block next door to our hatchery and put a small hostel and new shed on to increase our production capabilities. We would source sea-cucumber breeders from the communities and spawn them separately, and encourage 2 members from their communities to stay in Hervey Bay (on site on the boarding facilities) and after 2-3 months return home with the baby sea-cucumber (of same genetic material) and re-stock their waters. We would continue to offer full grow-out, training and advisory visits, as obviously we would have a financial interest in the fattening stock. Normally fattening time from placement to harvest time is 12-15 months, currently we get \$150/kg on the export market for dried sea-cucumber (Sandfish species).

Hatchery:
Phone: 07 4125 1344 Fax: 07 4125 1722

Cairns Factory:
Phone: 07 4031 0474 Fax: 07 4031 0394

The complexity of our hatchery system can be seen in papers enclosed, so it simply makes a lot of sense to mass produce product from our centralized hatchery and send juveniles to the various communities for placement from our hatchery direct. We would assist in all facets of grow-out harvest and processing techniques to ensure top grade product for the export market. The grow-out and subsequent production volumes would in a short time would be enormous in good grow-out areas – areas sought are sea-grass, mudflat/mangrove areas which are rich in nutrient fattening material for our product, ideally suited for coastal communities.

Job creation for indigenous communities would be immediate, ongoing and sustainable, as it is a very labour intensive business – but simple in structure. Over the next 12 months alone we anticipate processing over 100 tonne (wet weight) of sea-cucumber (both wild harvest and aquaculture production). Ironically this month we are sending over 300,000 juvenile sea-cucumbers for re-stocking Vanuatu, Solomon Islands & Fiji waters – as all Fisheries Ministers have visited our facility to ensure supplies for their respective Fisheries as they recognize the importance of this resource – it is ironic to help people offshore before helping our own people first.

Locally however I have had every obstacle possible put in front of myself when trying to install a simple re-seeding programme eg. The Quandamooka people (in Moreton Bay – Brisbane) wish to set-up an aquaculture operation in their own waters, with us. However because a smaller splinter tribe holds the wild harvest permit for sea-cucumber in that area, they will not allow the larger tribe to implement their chosen aquaculture project.

It is with hope, that you can see the bigger picture effects on large-scale opportunities for indigenous employment. More importantly is that it is of great and natural interest to them. We have already created the mainstream structure, now the 2nd phase is to get communities involved. I thank you for this opportunity to express my thoughts and hope my efforts are not wasted, as I believe in this project so much. Please find enclosed some articles regarding our facility.

Yours sincerely,



Ross Meaclem