

Ornamental Aquatics Consultancy Follow-Up

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**The Agro-Enterprise
Development Project**
Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Consultancy Details

Grants Written and Signed: 9

Grants in Preparation and Costing: 5

New fish species or varieties introduced: 4

Total fish species or varieties introduced: 14

Client Visits: 37

New Clients: 7

Meetings with National Aquatics Resource Agency: 1

Meetings with Export Development Board: 4

Meetings with Environmental NGO's: 4

Meetings with Development NGO: 3

Introduction

This consultant visit is a continuation of the pro-active AgEnt assistance to the ornamental aquatics sector. The continuation of this consultancy has resulted in AgEnt contact with approximately 90% of the members of this sector involved in export or commercial production for export. Ninety percent of these contacts have resulted in client files and about 75% of these clients are being considered for at least small scale assistance in 1994.

The presence of the AgEnt project and its assistance to this sector has seemingly encouraged many sector members to improve and develop their breeding and holding facilities. This is true of those who have received AgEnt assistance and those who have not. One of the reasons that this sector has developed so well in Singapore has been because of government support. AgEnt's support during the course of this project will help to accomplish the same thing type of supported development.

Client Progress Reports

The consultant visited all sector clients who had received AgEnt grant assistance during 1993. In-depth discussions were held in an attempt to extract the relevant information requested on the forms. Once the client understood what was being asked and why, they were much better able to put accurate figures on the forms. Business has been good for most sector clients and many reported a shortage of freshwater fishes for export orders. Many also had increased employee numbers during 1993.

Broodstock Enhancement Grants

During 1993 and continuing in 1994, AgEnt has assisted commercial ornamental fish farmers in obtaining new species and varieties of broodstock as well as better quality broodstock. To date 14 new varieties or species have been given to sector clients via shared cost assistance grants. The first clients to receive these in mid-1993 have already realized their first profits from the sale of offspring. In one case, a client realized thirty times their contribution to the grant agreement in a period of six months.

AgEnt clients who receive broodstock enhancement grants from AgEnt agree to share breeding groups of new fishes with other AgEnt clients as requested so that the entire sector can benefit.

Anti-predator Netting Grant Assistance

The success of the first grant assistance agreement to pioneer the use of American made anti-predator netting in Sri Lanka has generated direct benefits for the client recipient and has created interest from other members of the sector. The client's harvest rates in protected ponds now remain 50-60% higher than previous rates. This has enabled the client to obtain lucrative contract sales agreements from other exporters in the country and to increase employment levels at his fish farm.

American Regenerative Air Blower System Grants

One piece of new technology which will benefit the sector in Sri Lanka is American made regenerative air blowers. These energy efficient air delivery units can be used to both power low-tech filtration and for general aeration of breeding, growing, and holding tanks. The consultant was able to obtain an agreement from the American manufacturer of these units to sell them to Sri Lankan buyers at distributor prices which compete very well with similar products from Singapore and Japan. In addition the American units are thermally protected which can be crucial in a tropical climate like Sri Lanka's.

Low-Tech Air-Powered Filter Systems

AgEnt's work in this sector has tried to find a balance between the latest technology and that which is most effective in Sri Lanka given its existing resources. One piece of technology which AgEnt has introduced to the sector are air driven foam filters. These filters are inexpensive, effective at mechanical and biological filtration, and easy to maintain. In addition they are powered by energy efficient air blowers.

Several clients have been given trial samples of these types of filters and all have been enthusiastic with their performance. These filters will increase overall water quality and thus the quality of Sri Lanka's ornamental fish exports.

Water Quality Test Equipment

The consultant has succeeded in locating low cost water quality test kits for use in freshwater fish farms and holding facilities. While most fish farmers and exporters have test kits in their possession, they are often too complicated to use or too expensive per individual test to realize a benefit from their use. On this visit inexpensive trial test kits were given to clients and the initial results have been positive. AgEnt will work to secure additional quantities of these American made test kits via grant agreements.

Ornamental Marine Species Environmental Impact Assessment

The consultant has worked closely with AgEnt staff to locate an individual suitable to complete an EIA on the marine component of the ornamental fish sector in Sri Lanka. Dr. Jim Beets, a marine ecologist, who specializes in tropical reef systems is scheduled to begin the EIA in early April. The consultant will be communicating closely with Dr. Beets when the consultant returns to the US to help him prepare for a productive study. The Sri Lankan Wildlife Heritage Trust has already agreed to participate with AgEnt in coordinating this study.

AgEnt-Export Development Board Cooperation on INTERZOO

The consultant has worked closely with the EDB on the joint EDB-AgEnt effort to promote freshwater fishes at the upcoming trade show in Germany in May. This cooperation is helping to cement a strong working relationship with the EDB and will have positive ramifications in future areas where goals overlap. AgEnt has helped to spearhead a variety of plans, designs, and materials which will make the Sri Lankan presence a stand-out in Germany.

Cooperation with Development NGO

A small British NGO has expressed interest in assisting the freshwater fish farmers in Sri Lanka especially in the area of training. The consultant has met several times with the representative of this NGO to coordinate discuss strategy and coordinate efforts.

Update on Pioneer Marine Fish Culture in Sri Lanka

An American specialist in the commercial culture of ornamental marine species is scheduled to arrive in Sri Lanka to meet with AgEnt clients who are committed to pioneering this type of culture in Sri Lanka. This individual designed and ran one of the largest such facilities in the USA and has agreed to sell a technology transfer package to Sri Lanka via shared cost grant assistance agreements. This consultant is scheduled to arrive in late February and will evaluate client facilities for placement of culture systems. Once this evaluation is completed, it is anticipated that individuals from the respective clients will travel to the USA to work hands on in a functioning marine fish breeding facility while simultaneous construction of similar facilities occurs in Sri Lanka.

Update on Commercial Culture of Threatened Sri Lankan Freshwater Fish

The first grant agreement to support this endeavor was signed in October of 1993 and the client is scheduled to begin production in late spring. The consultant and the Wildlife Heritage Trust will work together on the consultants next visit to select appropriate broodstock for this project.

A second client has received a grant agreement to develop his hill-county commercial fish farm to breed threatened Sri Lankan freshwater fishes. This client has already successfully bred, with much effort, what is perhaps the most critically endangered freshwater fish in Sri Lanka. The aquarium in the AgEnt office conference room contains a school of third generation fish of this species.

Update on Fish Food Improvement Grant Agreement

The American machinery which will enable a local feed mill to produce a quality flaked fish food for ornamental fish producers in Sri Lanka will be shipped from the US in early March. It is hoped that the first product from this process will be available in the summer of 1994.

Continued Expansion of Freshwater Fish Production in Sri Lanka

The previous consultant visit identified four ornamental fish exporters from Sri Lanka who were actively involved in the looking for land to develop freshwater fish farms. Two of these clients have now purchased land and one of these will have his ponds completed and ready for occupancy in early Spring. AgEnt is supporting these environmentally positive efforts with grant assistance to bring in optimum technology. Two additional client contacts, one new and the other existing, are will also be developing fish farms sites during 1994.

AgEnt Ornamental Aquatics Sector Newsletter

The consultant has been working on a bi-monthly four page newsletter which is designed to assist and unify the Sri Lankan ornamental aquatics sector. The focus will be on freshwater fish production and customer satisfaction. The first issue will be ready in February.

Environmental NGO Cooperation

The consultant has continued to cooperate with a local environmental NGO which has demonstrated expertise in Sri Lankan aquatic ecosystems. As mentioned above cooperation will occur with the marine species EIA and the commercial production of threatened Sri Lankan freshwater fishes. Design and planning for an educational fish poster is also being assisted by this NGO.

Local Agents/Vendors for AgEnt Procured Equipment/Technology

One of the assistance goals to this sector is to establish and assist local agents/vendors who can continue to supply the sector with many of the products needed to develop and sustain the sector. Discussions were held with two clients who show interest and aptitude in becoming importers and sales agents for many of the American products relevant to the ornamental fish sector. The consultant will be gathering catalogs and speaking to some of the American manufacturers of such equipment/technology prior to his next visit to Sri Lanka.

Miscellaneous

During the course of this consultancy the consultant assisted in several other areas including evaluation of fisheries and prawn aquaculture client files, preparation of AgEnt project materials, and discussions of the proposed pro-active look at the potential for ecotourism in Sri Lanka.