

The Seychelles first Echinoderm Containerized Hatchery

The Seychelles Fishing Authority's (SFA) Aquaculture Department opens its first ever echinoderm containerized hatchery capable of producing between 18 000 and 288 000 of juvenile sea cucumbers and sea urchins per cycle. The department unlocks another milestone in the development of aquaculture sector.

The opening ceremony was an opportunity for representatives of SWIOFish3, SFA board members and other stakeholders to view the facility that at present houses only some sea urchin larvae and some micro-algae.

The proud achievement of the department was celebrated on the 29th of February 2024 with the cutting of the inaugural ribbon by the Minister for Fisheries and Blue Economy, Jean-Francois Ferrari, the French Ambassador representing the European Union – H.E Olivia Berkeley Christmann, the Chief Executive Officer of SFA- Dr. Jan Robinson and the Head of the Aquaculture department- Aubrey Lesperance.

The hatchery is a modern containerised incubator that can produce sea urchins and sea cucumbers from the larval stage to juvenile stage before being transferred to larger areas for grow out phase until harvest.

Echinoderm, the term used to describe species such as sea urchin and sea cucumbers are in great demand globally and more particularly in the Far and Southeast Asian countries.

The facility consists of two 20 ft containers and one 40 ft container which comprises mostly of larval and micro-algal rearing tanks and other incubating equipment. One of the containers provides an added capacity in ensuring that the highest water quality is provided to allow for an optimal level of sea urchin and sea cucumbers are raised in the facility.

The project costing SCR1.7 million is being funded under the 3rd Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries governance and shared growth project (SWIOFish3).

The project is a step forward in achieving the key objectives of the Mariculture Master Plan in the long term. Over the years, the government through SFA's Aquaculture Department has developed a Broodstock, Acclimation, and Quarantine Facility (BAQF) primarily focused on finfish farming within the sector. It has also developed the Sea urchin Research Facility (SURF) based at the Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA) and it has also operationalized 2 open ocean sea cages just about 300m away from the Providence Fishing Port. The Aquaculture Department has also successfully sought funding to purchase a service boat which is used to collect broodstock, carry out environmental monitoring at the various sea-based sites, scouting for new sites, servicing the open ocean sea cages among other tasks.

During the opening ceremony, both Minister Ferrari and the CEO of SFA acknowledged the efforts of the aquaculture staff. They made mention to the great importance of this new facility and encouraged locals to venture in the aquaculture business and make use of such infrastructures.

'If we are to realise the full potential of the aquaculture sector, we need public sector investment and we need most importantly private sector investment. With the support of partners, including those represented here, there has already been substantial investment in the planning, capacity building, research and policy and regulatory frameworks in the recent years. And with infrastructures such as this, we are going further to try and provide support to the private sector to realise the potential that the sector has to offer,' said CEO Robinson.



The Aquaculture department taking a souvenir photo with management



One of the equipment housing the sea urchin and sea cucumber larvae



One of the segmented water tanks