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DA-BFAR's Satellite Hatcheries to Boost Country's Milkfish Industry

Soon bangus fry need not come from the wild.

The Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) has now created an effective model for milkfish satellite hatcheries under its Bangus Fry Sufficiency Program.

The first batch of bangus fry ever produced in a government-funded satellite hatchery since the project began, a total of 110,000 bangus fry were harvested on July 19, 2020 in Lingayen, Pangasinan and sold to milkfish farmers in the same province at thirty centavos (Php 0.30) per piece.

“Through the Bangus Fry Sufficiency Program, DA-BFAR targets provision of affordable, locally-sourced bangus fry for our milkfish farmers not only in Region 1 but also in the entire country. This way, we will never have to fully resort to other means such as harvesting from the wild; thus, protecting and conserving our wild bangus stock,” DA-BFAR Director Eduardo Gongona said.

At present, there are five operational bangus satellite hatcheries in the country: two are located in Region I while the other three are found in the province of Bohol in Region 7. All hatcheries were turned over and are now being managed by identified fisherfolk groups and associations.

Under the five-year Bangus Fry Sufficiency Program 2020-2025, DA-BFAR plans to augment this by establishing a total of 299 Satellite Community-Based Larval Rearing Facility (SCBLRF) in the country. These small-scale hatchery facilities procure eggs from traditional milkfish hatcheries for hatching and larval rearing until the fry reaches marketable stage. In addition to the five established and fully-operational satellite hatcheries, fourteen (14) SCBLRFs have already received funding and currently undergoing infrastructure development.

Aside from the establishment of SCBLRFs, the Bangus Fry Sufficiency Program also includes development of milkfish broodstock, establishment of fry holding facilities and fry nursery areas as well as provision of fry collecting gears in the regions to maximize the country's wild fry resource.

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Prior to the establishment of milkfish satellite hatcheries, bangus fry were originally sourced from BFAR-registered hatcheries and in the wild. Despite the great potential, the local milkfish industry faces an estimated annual deficit of 2.810 billion locally-sourced fry. In 2019, only 860.75 million fry were produced by registered bangus hatcheries while 19.5 million of which were caught in the wild. In total, this only comprised 24% of the total annual fry requirement. To compensate for this deficit, bangus fish farmers resorted to importing bangus fry to sustain annual production.

In the next five years, DA-BFAR's sees that the Bangus Fry Sufficiency Program can add an estimated 1.5 billion locally-sourced fry to the existing fry production, spurring the growth in the bangus industry. In 2019, the local bangus industry produced a total of 409,907 metric tons contributing to 17.38% of the annual total aquaculture production of the country.

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References:

BFAR-Information and Fisherfolk Coordination Unit at dabfar_iprg@yahoo.com

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