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Center for Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM)

Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

CBRM Database

Date:	12/15/2011	Entry Number:	1155
Case Study Name:	Prospects for community-based seahorse aquaculture in Vietnam		
Author:	Truong Si Ky		
Document Type:	Paper in scientific journal		
Year:	1998		
Language:	English		
Document Location:	http://www.mendeley.com/research/prospects-for-communitybased-seahorse-aquaculture-in-vietnam/		
Full Citation:	Ky, T. S. (1998) Prospects for community-based seahorse aquaculture in Vietnam, Marine Biology of the South China Sea Iii (1998) Pages: 465-474 578		
Region:	Southeast Asia		
Country:	Vietnam		
Ecosystem Type:	Aquatic		
Social Characteristics:	Rural community		
Scale of Study:	National		
Resource Type:	Aquaculture		
Type of Initiative:	Research driven project		
Community Based Work:	Resource management		
Keywords:	Seahorses, Community-based aquaculture		

Summary:	Last year, Vietnam exported about five tonnes of seahorses (Hippocampus) for Chinese medicine. This trade is growing rapidly and appears to be leading to a decline in the number and size of wild seahorses. Aquaculture would offer a means of reducing pressure on natural populations while bringing economic benefits to fishers and farmers. This would be particularly welcome since many are being forced to abandon shrimp culturing because of problems with diseases and eutrophication. Vietnam has at least eight species of seahorse, of which three are heavily exploited. The Institute of Oceanography has been carrying out trial culturing of two of these species, putative Hippocampus kuda and Hippocampus trimaculatus. Seahorses mate easily in captivity, although their fecundity is low, with a maximum of 1,500 young for each male pregnancy. Rearing the young proves problematic because they are vulnerable to diseases and will only eat live moving prey. Nonetheless, seahorses are repeatedly been reared to about three months (7 cm) in pilot studies; this is now becoming a commercial viable size, despite being juveniles. While we continue trying to close the life cycle and rear seahorses to adulthood, we are also beginning the process of introducing small - scale culturing to local communities.