



Professor J.H.Choat
College of Marine and Environmental Sciences
James Cook University
Townsville 4811.
Australia.
Ph: 07 4781 6383

john.choat@jcu.edu.au

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To whom it may concern

Re: Mr. T. Bowling; culturing of reef fish for natural restocking of reefs and exploratory aquaculture ventures.

The fact that on a global basis coral reef fisheries have been depleted by overfishing is self evident Anyone who has surveyed fish markets over a time period of greater than 10 years will have noted the decline in the number of preferred food species such as groupers the reduced size of the remaining catch, and the switching to alternative targets such as surgeon fish and parrotfish. A number of nations (including Palau) have taken the enlightened view of protecting reef fish stocks commercial overfishing. However depletion is widespread over much of the Pacific and a number of maritime nations are investigating possibilities of culturing reef fish as a replacement strategy. I have spent some time in the Philippines and Taiwan examining culturing enterprises of a number of reef species. In many cases there have been difficulties in capturing and maintain adult stocks or collecting juveniles for grow-out ventures.

I am now familiar with the techniques developed by Mr. Bowling involving the sampling of fertilized eggs at the moment of spawning. This is the most cost-effective and conservation-effective approach that I can think of. It does not damage the adult breeding stock which many of the other culturing enterprises do, and collects the offspring at a time when mortality is highest. Over 99% of the eggs and larvae will not survive to adult hood. Those collected by Mr Bowling achieve high survival rates. The results achieved in raising the endangered giant bumphead parrotfish from the egg crop with high survival rates are extraordinary. I have worked on this species for 20 years and this is the most innovative blend of good science and a potential conservation and commercial enterprise that I have seen in this time. At present this species is being overfished throughout Melanesia as a commercial enterprise. Techniques that have the potential to provide material for restocking WITHOUT damage to the parent breeding stock in the country of origin are worthy of support. This result is so exciting to a reef fisheries biologist that I will seek to visit Palau in 2015 to review the operation first hand. I give this enterprise my strongest support.

Sincerely

J.H.Choat : Professor Marine Biology