REVIEW OF A PILOT PROJECT FOR THE FARMING MACROBRACHIUM ROSESBERGII

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The farming of *M. rosenbergii* is practised in many parts of S. E. Asia; Ling (1967) was the first to complete the life cycle through all stages, in the laboratory. Fujimura and Okamoto (1970) demonstrated the commercial potential of Ling's work.

In 1978 Lever Brothers commissioned a pilot project located in a typical mangrove bordering Negombo lagoon. A hatchery was set up consisting of rectangular cement tanks, six for larval rearing from 1.3 to 7 tons, and seven storage and service tanks of 5 to 7 tons capacity. The tanks were supplied with water from specially sunk low cost tube wells. Berried female prawns were collected from Dandugan Oya. Larvae were successfully taken through hatching to post larvae in under 45 days. The larvae were fed with fish flesh and nauplii of *Artemia salina*. The production of post larvae was 3 to 4 per litre at a survival rate of 20% – 25%.

Earth ponds of 1/12 acre to 1/4 acre were constructed for grow out. Water was supplied from fresh water tube wells. Stocking density ranged fron 2 to 0.4 post larvae per square foot. The prawns were fed daily with broiler starter. After 3½ months, selective harvesting every 10 days was begun and continued upto 7 months. The average weight of a prawn was 43 gms. and the annual projected yield was 1400 lbs. per acre.

The project has demonstrated that it is possible to produce *M. rosenbergii* on a commercial scale in mangrove areas unsuited for other enterprises.