

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

LATEST NEWS

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Hawaii company to export breeding shrimp to Southeast Asia

Kona Bay Marine Resources Inc., a Hawaii-based marine biotechnology company, has gotten a license to export shrimp brood stock to Thailand, the largest shrimp producer in the world.

It is one of only three licenses in the world that Thailand has granted, Kona Bay Marine said Monday. To meet the demand, the company has increased its capacity 50 percent and plans to double that next year.

"This is validation that Hawaii now has the first global agricultural brand since Kona coffee," said CEO Brian Goldstein. "It validates our strategy to become the leading shrimp brood stock exporter in the world."

Kona Bay Marine Resources was founded to commercialize biotechnology developed at the University of Hawaii that provided disease-free and disease-resistant white shrimp. Since then it has developed a proprietary polyculture biotech that allows two different species to exist in one system. It's based on symbiosis any bivalve (oysters, clams) continuously cleans the shrimp water, producing stronger, hardier shrimp brood stock. The system also is dependent on the pristine, disease-free deep ocean water from offshore pipelines at its facility at the Natural Energy Laboratory at Keahole Point on the Big Island, as well as the solar irradiance in Hawaii.

The company has been exporting since 2003 to China, Taiwan, Viet Nam, Indonesia and the U.S. mainland. In addition to shrimp brood stock, it exports clam seed (baby clams) to clam farmers on the U.S. mainland and in Mexico.

Kona Bay is a venture- and angel-backed company, including HMS Hawaii, Advantage Capital, International Venture Fund/Invencor, Singapore-based Technology Ventures and both Hawaii and U.S. mainland angels. "We will be raising funds for the expansion in the coming months and are happy to say we already have some commitments," said Goldstein.

Until about three years ago, Thailand produced only black tiger shrimp. The move to importing white, or domesticated, shrimp is the result of increasing disease in wild tiger shrimp. Thailand forecasts that 80 percent to 90 percent of its production will be white shrimp in 2004.

Disease can be passed genetically in shrimp and infected shrimp easily pass on their disease to healthy shrimp. Oceanic Institute in Hawaii was the first in the world to develop specific-pathogen-free white shrimp, a domesticated disease-free shrimp to replace wild shrimp. Because of its pristine ocean environment and its leading biotechnology research in shrimp, Hawaii is known throughout the world for its shrimp brood stock.

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