

The cultivated pearl market in Tahiti

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The cultivated pearl market in Tahiti has suffered a price decline of more than 38 per cent since 1991 (see table below), caused by internal and external factors in the Polynesian pearl culture sector.

Year	Weight exported (kg)	Value (million CFPs)	Average price (CFP/gr)
1990	575	3,731	6,490
1991	786	4,303	5,475
1992	1,069	4,194	3,925

Outside French Polynesia, two main factors can be identified as being responsible for current developments in marketing of pearls:

—the world recession which affects the principal clients for Tahitian cultivated pearls; and

—competition from Indonesian pearl producers.

In French Polynesia, a very significant increase in production (more than 27 per cent over 2 years) and an increase in the number of producers have led to highly competitive pricing in a depressed external market.

This trend seems to be continuing in 1993, forcing Polynesian producers to consolidate and restructure in order to survive the pricing crisis.

Exports of Polynesian pearls seem to have reached the level of maturity on the classic curve of product life cycle as described by Dean.

Contrary to certain claims, it appears therefore that the annual production level of 1 tonne is not enough to encourage product acceptance at the best market price.

Indeed, the present situation shows that a maturity level has been reached where supply and demand cancel each other out and the price meets the break-even point of pearl producers.



Update on ICLARM Coastal Aquaculture Centre pearl culture trials

Source: ICLARM

Funding for Mark Gervis to undertake a short term preparatory study on pearl oyster cultivation was provided by the British ODA. The funding ran from November 1990 to March 1991 and resulted in the preparation of two publications, a bibliography and a review of the biology and culture of pearl oysters, the latter in co-authorship with N.A. Sims.

Preliminary spat collection trials were undertaken and showed that a very diverse array of species of pearl oysters are present in Solomon Islands.

Sixty *Pinctada maxima* broodstock were collected by staff of the Solomon Islands Fisheries Division and are being held on racks at the CAC's reef for use in future work.

Excerpt from ICLARM Coastal Aquaculture Centre's Annual Report