

## **DAVAO'S FIRST MOTHER OF PEARL HATCHERY: IN THE MAKING**

By: Antolin E. Bongcawel, Jr., PhD

The Mother of Pearl Hatchery Technical Working Group (MOP-TWG) composed of Dr. Antolin E. Bongcawel, Jr., Engr. Kerwin Matthew M. Teh, and Kimberly A. Cuberos conducted a farm study at the Hikari SSP Pearl Farm and KrisJewels Pearl Farm, Palawan last April 16-23, 2019. The farm visit was made purposely to acquire technical acumen of the pearl farm hatchery operation, cultivation of spats (juvenile oyster shells), and grow-out farming for inoculated shells to produce world class pearls that meet the increasing demand of the world market.

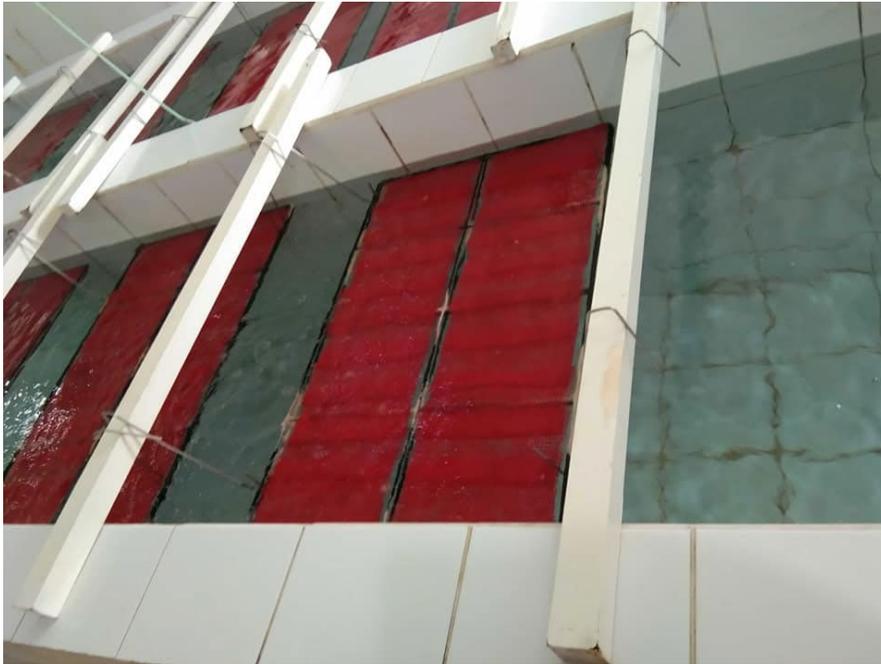
Presently, the MOP-TWG is working on a proposal to put up a Mother of Pearl Hatchery as the initial step in resolving the scarce supply of spats needed in developing the pearl farming industry in the region. Its private partner, the Maxima Jewel of the Sea, Inc. is working closely with the agency and the local government of IGaCoS, Davao del Norte for the permits, use of land and coastal waters, and the involvement of the local community in the operation of the hatchery and operationalization of the proposed farm site in the Island Garden City of Samal. The proposed hatchery is scaled to supply the needs of the whole region for juvenile spats.

BFAR'S National Director, Usec. Eduardo B. Gongona, visited BFAR's Regional Office last April 29, 2019 to encourage its personnel to facilitate the preparation of proposals that complement BFAR's current thrust of increasing the production of banner fishery commodities, namely: bangus, tilapia, shrimp, seaweeds, and seashells. The seashell species targeted for pearl farming are *Pinctada maxima* and *Pinctada margaritifera* – the species known as viable hosts for culturing gold and black pearls, respectively.

Director Fatma M. Idris, the Regional Director of BFAR-XI has commissioned the Technical Working Group to develop the proposal not only to establish a hatchery but to include the cultivation area for the development of spats and the grow-out area for the grafted spats as the first MOP techno-demo farm in the region.

To benefit the local fisherfolks, the hatchery is envisioned to distribute juvenile spats for free to local community growers. Juvenile spats are grown to ready-for-grafting size to be sold to pearl culture farm operators. Other by-products considered for cottage industries are the necklaces, coin purses, bracelets, and jewelry boxes which can be crafted from the *maxima* or *margaritifera* shells. Hikari SSI Pearl farm has integrated in their product line for the local and international market. Keshi pearls (irregular size pearls) may be powdered and used as a whitening ingredient of soap, which is currently produced by KrisJewel Pearl Farm Model for the vast domestic market. -o0o-

**Pictures:**



**A lay-out of the larval rearing tanks for the development of free swimming larvae to juvenile spats .**



**A good quality pearl has a nacre layer at least 0.08-0.12 in (2-3 mm) thick, which takes a minimum of 18 months in the grow out area.**



**Coin purses and bracelets made of P. maxima shells sold at the farm site**



**The Mother of Pearl Hatchery – Technical Working Group:  
(from left) Kimberly Cuberos, Engr. Kerwin Teh, and  
Antolin Bongcawel, Jr. (Adviser: Raul Millana)**