

Pilot Project on Live Rock Culture

Live rock is a piece of substrate entrusted with marine organisms which has a great demand in the export market of ornamental fish. These substrates are used by the marine hobbyist to build an artificial reef of live rock in the home aquaria (*P J Rubec et.al, 2001.*)

Instead of using natural substrate to produce live rock, artificial substrates were used. There were two types of substrates used in this pilot project. The shaped substrates (rock) were made of (Size 7.62 x 10.16 *2 cm) special clay (stone ware) at the initial stage. These substrates were made by creating different appearance of modes on the surface. These rocks have holes. Later, another rock was made of same clay to attract more organisms however, it was a different shape. This rock also has holes in the center. These holes facilitate the binding ability when the rock was deployed in the reef area of the sea. The site was selected for live rock culture project at Kapparatota reef area of the sea. Water depth of the area was around 2-3 meters which is having high light intensity. Substrates deployed areas were changed on the density of fauna and flora that are available in the reef area during the study period.

The substrates recovered after 02 months showed *Caulerpa racemosa* and within one year it was able to get stiles with various type of Calcareous algae (red, purple, pink, green, etc) and Corallimopharians (small Anemones). The brown color organisms were Corallimorpharians which are small anemones (invertebrates) that grew on the live rock. During the study, it was realized that a live rock can be cultured well where there is high diversity of plants and organisms present in the reef area. The conclusions can be made as a) Farming live rock is feasible at Kapparatota Reef Sea area b) User right of portion of sea area to culture live rock which is declared under Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act to be facilitated c) More Studies to be carried out by other research organizations to identify the areas of the sea around the country where high valued live rocks can be cultured.