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## RESEARCH REPORTS

Sustainable Aquaculture for a Secure future

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**Title:** Marine Ornamentals Industry 2001: Priority Recommendations for a Sustainable Future

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**Abstract:** The marine ornamentals industry around the world encompasses a broad array of disciplines, interests, and activities. Simply describing the chain of product distribution (chain of custody) includes mention of collectors and culturists, wholesalers and transshippers, distributors and retailers small and large, and of course hobbyists. When we add to this the equipment and supplies manufacturers, government resource managers and regulators, researchers and extension agents, educators and public aquariums, various media and international conservation organizations, the list of stakeholders in the future of the industry becomes daunting.

Indeed, as the twenty-first century dawns, interest in marine ornamentals is growing rapidly but perhaps not for the best of reasons. Reportedly, between 15 and 30 million marine fish from among approximately 1,000 species enter the trade every year, though accurate statistics are lacking (Wood 2001). Hundreds of species of marine invertebrates are also sold. Currently, as much as 98% of the marine ornamental species marketed are wild animals collected from coral reefs, mostly in tropical developing countries, for example, the Philippines and Indonesia (Moe 2001; Dawes 2001 a). Major problems with collecting in the wild have been described by numerous recent reports, including the widespread use of chemicals and other destructive collection methods that damage coral reefs, negative social and economic impacts on rural coastal communities, and inadequate handling and shipping procedures that cause unnecessary stock mortalities (Baquero 1999; Wood 2001; Cruz 2001; Dawes 2001a).

Aquacultured sources in the marine ornamentals trade account for less than 2% of the supply, and sources of commercial quantities of product have been slow to develop (Moe 2001). The life histories of many economically important marine reef fish and invertebrates are extremely

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complex and difficult to control (Ziemann 2001; Brown 2001). Moreover, the marketplace has yet to appreciate fully the advantages of cultured species over wild-caught species and therefore accept the higher prices charged (Stime 2001).

This abstract is excerpted from the original paper, which was in: J. Cato and C.L. Brown (Editors), *Marine Ornamental Species: Collection, Culture, and Conservation*. Iowa State University Press, Ames, IA. pp. 3–10. (2003)