NEWS RELEASE

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EUROPEAN BREAKTHROUGH ON BLUEFIN TUNA BOOSTS CLEAN SEAS' ARTIFICIAL BREEDING REGIME

World-first breeding techniques pioneered by Clean Seas Tuna Limited to artificially reproduce Southern Bluefin Tuna have been successfully replicated in Europe.

European research consortium Allotuna has reported productive spawning of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna – the SBT's northern cousin – using the same strategy conceived by Port Lincoln-based Clean Seas earlier this year.

Allotuna's international research team which includes Dr Dinos Mylanos and Prof Chris Bridges – both members of Clean Seas' advisory panel – successfully collected over 10 million eggs from sea cage broodstock last weekend after hormone induction trials on a tuna farm in Italy.

The spawned eggs have since been transferred to a commercial hatchery in Bari where the larvae will feed and grow. Eggs have also been transferred to key hatcheries in France, Crete, Israel, Malta and Spain for further rearing and research.

Prof Bridges said the breeding breakthrough is a major boost for the fishing industry worldwide, which faces a critical shortage of Bluefin Tuna.

'Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna wild stocks are heavily threatened by overfishing, so much so that the fishery was closed earlier this year amid loud protests from the fishing industry," said Prof Bridges.

'This development represents a major breakthrough in providing commercial quantities of eggs 'on demand' for feeding into hatchery systems. Although there is much further work to do, it is clear that this technology can be applied to solve one of the major bottlenecks in the production of sustainable aquaculture for the endangered Bluefin Tuna."

Clean Seas Chairman, Hagen Stehr AO, was buoyed by the development in Europe and said it was a great endorsement of his company's ongoing research.

'It proves that Clean Seas Tuna is right on target with its Southern Bluefin Tuna lifecycle project and that it is a matter of when, not if, commercialisation starts,"said Mr Stehr.

In March this year, Clean Seas became the first organisation in the world to create an artificial breeding regime for Southern Bluefin Tuna. The successful collection of SBT sperm and eggs spawned by captive tuna in the company's land-based breeding facility at Arno Bay will allow the realisation of the company's plans to close the lifecycle of SBT, potentially establish a valuable SBT sperm bank and secure sustainable production of this premium endangered species.

The breeding regime is expected to give Clean Seas the ability to at least duplicate Australia's Southern Bluefin Tuna annual quota within the next few years and to dramatically grow the aquaculture industry on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula without impacting on wild tuna stocks.

'We are on track with our artificial breeding regime and our primary objective remains to grow out SBT fingerlings produced from our own broodstock to sizes required by the rapidly expanding world seafood markets. This will enable year round production of SBT and lower the overall cost of production," said Mr Stehr.

'This has extraordinary benefits for Clean Seas and its shareholders in that these fish will not be subject to the strict Australian SBT wild catch quotas. There will also be no trade barriers for their sale into major fish markets of Japan, China, the US and the European Union where natural fish stocks are severely depleted.

'We are confident that we will be able to emulate the success we have achieved with other aquaculture species such as Yellowtail Kingfish and Mulloway – and in so doing reward the faith of those who have invested in our dream and those who have worked so hard to turn it into reality."

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