

#### 4. PRESENT STATUS OF INDIAN AQUACULTURE

Due to its importance to foreign exchange earnings and profits, cultured shrimp aquaculture is at present the primary, almost singular, focus of attention in Indian aquaculture. In order to understand the present status of shrimp farming, a brief history is relevant:

- In the late 80's, the (Federal) Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) created a demonstration hatchery and grow-out facility for *P. monodon* species of Tiger Shrimp, and promoted the establishment of extensive and semi-intensive shrimp farming for export.
- MPEDA policies spawned intense entrepreneurial activity by agricultural workers, cooperatives, the burgeoning middle class, and corporations seeking business diversification.
- Production soared until the appearance of viral disease in 1994. Then in 1995, strong condemnatory reactions from social and environmental groups resulted in a Supreme Court injunction against the development of new farms. Thus, in late 1995 shrimp production stalled. For example, of the 76 hatcheries in the States of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, only 26 are now in production.
- Financial institutions and insurance companies have greatly reduced their involvement in the industry; however, they are promoting better management practices.
- Finally, in February 1996, the MPEDA announced a new master plan for subsidised aquaculture development to be promoted by State Governments "... in areas where there would be no social opposition..."

The above is a snapshot of an industry in trouble, urgently seeking help in the form of joint ventures that could infuse both capital and technical management skills and practices, as well as re-establish confidence in the industry.

The following quote from a major Indian newspaper is representative of the Indian industry's current status:

**"Inland Aquaculture Gaining Importance...** The focus has now shifted to inland aquaculture in the Cauvery delta with coastal aquaculture running into rough weather. Big sea food industrialists who started prawn farms in Nagapattinam district are keeping their fingers crossed, thanks to opposition from locals and cases pending in the Supreme Court, besides virus attacks. In the case of inland aquaculture, pollution problems and virus attacks are virtually nil. Even small and marginal farmers can invest money in the project. The Government is planning to train women in inland aquaculture."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>*The Hindu*. November 14, 1995.