

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 284
Asked on 22 March 2011

MR RYAN asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies (MR MULHERIN)—

QUESTION:

How are Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation scientists assisting Queensland's barramundi farmers to improve product?

ANSWER:

Barramundi farming is the second largest aquaculture activity in Queensland. Currently, production in Queensland far outstrips that of any other state and is growing at the fastest rate in Australia.

In support of Queensland's barramundi industry, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) scientists are undertaking a range of projects that will assist barramundi farmers to improve their product.

One such project, which has the support of the Australian Barramundi Farmers Association and the Australian Seafood Cooperative Research Centre, is helping farmers achieve consistent, high-quality flavour and scales of production.

As part of this project, DEEDI scientists developed and provided to barramundi farmers, a new technique which allows them to self assess the product attributes of their barramundi. DEEDI scientists also provided farmers with an opportunity to taste product from different sources prepared under standard conditions, thereby enhancing farmers' understanding of the flavour complexities of barramundi. Both these project outcomes are assisting Queensland barramundi farmers to improve their product.

A further project being undertaken by DEEDI scientists is investigating whether the consumption of a particular natural algae extract by barramundi imparts quality attributes in the barramundi's flesh. To date, results have shown that the appropriate concentration of the particular natural algae extract imparts a briny, ocean, fresh sea odour to the flesh. This finding is of particular interest to the barramundi industry and further investigations are anticipated in order to ensure the benefits of this discovery are utilised to the fullest extent for the barramundi industry.

A national project is also underway to develop a co-ordinated, barramundi industry-wide selective breeding program. DEEDI scientists have designed a breeding program that makes the most of barramundi's reproductive characteristics. This has the potential to reduce the number of generations required to standardise desired stock attributes. Industry is currently considering options for the implementation of DEEDI's breeding program.

DEEDI is very supportive of the barramundi industry and the economic benefits it delivers for Queensland. The range of projects being undertaken by DEEDI scientists is assisting Queensland's barramundi farmers to improve their product and is further contributing to Australia's international reputation for quality, reliable, safe seafood.