



The Hon. David Littleproud MP
Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia
Deputy Leader of the Nationals

M E D I A R E L E A S E

Thursday 7th October 2021

Building better biosecurity for prawn production

A research and development project at James Cook University, Townsville will receive \$378,564 in funding from Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA).

The Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia, David Littleproud said the project is a collaboration with the Australian Prawn Farmers Association to identify the most common biosecurity risks to the prawn industry.

“Pathogens and viruses are a couple of the biggest challenges that are facing the industry as it tries to grow the sustainable, fresh seafood market,” Minister Littleproud said.

“The research and development will focus on the impact of purified viruses on the survival, growth and biology of prawns.

“Producers will be able to better manage their breeding stock by understanding which have genetic resistance, with the outcome of a disease resistant or tolerant prawn.”

The research builds on the data from CRCNA biosecurity audit of 2020 which identified the most common pathogens and viruses found in tiger prawn populations across Queensland.

Lead researcher Dr Kelly Condon said that purified strains mean researchers can then develop tests to more easily and accurately identify when pathogen strains are present in commercial and wild caught prawn populations.

“It means farmers can, with the knowledge of the resistance genes, be able to screen populations and select for the individuals that have the resistant gene,” she said.

Tony Charles from the Australian Prawn Farmers Association’s RD&E Sub-committee says this project could deliver big wins for the industry.

“Although these pathogens and viruses are not harmful to human health, this knowledge will increase certainty in biosecurity management and hopefully help our prawn farmers grow their business profitability,” he said.

CRCNA CEO Anne Stünzner said the project will deliver much more than improved biosecurity management tools for the prawn industry.

“This project takes a lot of the guess work out and gives producers – and the industry – better biosecurity management tools for decision making, said Minister Littleproud.

“Innovations like this are critical for our aquaculture industry as its rises to the challenge of expanding into northern Australia.”

Media Contact: 0455 448 985