New possibilities for farming the European lobster

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Why should we farm lobsters?

- High and increasing value (>30 Euro/kg)
- Estimated production costs around 22 Euro/kg
- International market appeal
- Well understood life cycle
- More than 100 years experience with larval rearing
- Many centuries experience with live holding and trade with live lobsters
- Large research base on European (*Homarus gammarus*) and American lobsters (*H. americanus*) biology
- More developed aquaculture technology
Historical background

- The hatchery movement 1880-1954
  - Release of millions I-stage and IV-stage lobster
  - Several hatcheries in USA, Canada, GB, France, Norway
  - No tagging - no results

- The lobster aquaculture program in USA and Canada 1970’s
  - Rearing technology
  - Brood stock - closed cycle
  - Lobster feed experiments

- The sea ranching projects UK & Norway 1980-95
  - Mass production technology for X-XII-stage juveniles
  - Release of tagged large juveniles (magnetic wire tags)

Tiedemann lobster hatchery, Norway
Production capacity 120,000 XII stage lobsters (6 cm TL) - (1981-1994)
Production methods

- Wild brood stock – fertilized eggs
- Females carries eggs for 11 months until hatching
- 2 weeks pelagic stage in larval tanks (Stage I-IV), fed live *Artemia* or frozen crustaceans
- Instar IV-XII - ongrowing separately or communally (TL 5 cm)
- Released into sea (IV-XII) or on-growing in separate containers in 18-22°C water
- Harvest
  - Sea-ranching: 3-10 years (>500g)
  - Battery culture: > 2 years (>250g)

*Wickins & Lee (2002) Crustacean Farming*
Stock enhancement and sea ranching

The Kvitsøy project (1991-2001):

- 125,000 tagged lobsters released
- >8000 (2-15%) recaptured
- 50-60% of the catches at Kvitsøy
- Same growth rates and size at maturity as wild lobsters
- No migration from Kvitsøy
- Still recaptures 10 years after release

From 2003 a new law will give property rights for lobsters caught within licensed areas

The Norwegian lobster farming and sea ranching organisation established 2002
Intensive farming
The Plate-sized lobster project (2001–)

Goal: Produce plate sized 250g lobsters two years from hatching

Research topics:
Substrate and shelter demands
Evaluation of food types
Family variation
Recirculation and water quality management
Development of technology
Market study
Results: Growth rates

![Graph showing growth rates of small juveniles reared from stage IV and large juveniles reared from age one.](image)

- **Small juveniles reared from stage IV**: Growth rate is represented by a red line.
- **Large juveniles reared from age one**: Growth rate is represented by a blue line.

**Goal**
Results: Growth rates

Total length at 3 months at age

- DRY FOOD
- +1d lobster
- KRILL
- MYSIDES
- ROTATIONAL

TL (mm)
Other results

- No effects of substrate or shelter on growth and survival in single confinements
- Little variation in growth between families (6 fam. tested)
- Shell sand in cages (V-stage) gives 90% crusher claws
- Shell sand doubles survival in communal tanks
- High survival on marine dry fish feed
- Weak pigmentation (pale blue) with marine fish feed
- Temperature variation may be lethal for lobsters close to moulting
- The first plate sized lobster produced had better taste and texture than wild lobster in blind test!
Intensive farming

Research priorities

- Dry food
  - Pigments, fatty acid and amino acid profiles, phospholipids...
  - Optimisation of diet
- Feeding and cleaning technology for small containers
- Water quality management
- Data on NH₃, CO₂ production for calculation of biofilter capacity
- Effective IV-stage production
- Area and water depth demands
- Product quality
Extensive farming

Research priorities

- Production of low cost juveniles "born to be wild"
- Release strategies
  - Habitat (bottom type, depth, etc.)
  - Size at release
  - Release season
  - Predator control
  - Geographic location
Main bottlenecks for intensive lobster farming

- A dry food for all stages of lobsters that:
  - gives growth rates and pigmentation like lobster fed natural food
  - can be accurately and rapidly fed in small portions to many small containers
  - gives lobster with “wild lobster” taste and meat quality
- An efficient “automatic” rearing system with:
  - A large numbers of small containers
  - Effective feeding and cleaning system
  - Safe and stable water quality (temperature, O₂, NH₃,..)
  - "Low” production cost
- Money for research and development
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