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Sustainable Crab Production through Resource-Efficient Aquaculture

Munsu Wallraven*

Department of Aquatic Systems, Pukyong National University, Busan, South Korea

DESCRIPTION

Crab production has become an important part of coastal aquaculture because crabs provide valuable protein, support livelihoods, and create income opportunities for farming communities. However, increasing production can place pressure on water resources, feed supplies, pond environments, and wild crab populations when farming practices are poorly managed. Sustainable crab production requires a production system that maintains animal health and growth while reducing unnecessary resource use and limiting environmental impacts. The approach can include appropriate species selection, efficient feeding, water-quality monitoring, responsible stocking, habitat management, disease prevention, and careful handling of farm wastes.

Mud crab culture is particularly suitable for many coastal areas because mud crabs can tolerate a range of environmental conditions and have strong market demand. Species such as *Scylla serrata*, *Scylla paramamosain*, and related mud crab species are cultured in ponds, pens, cages, and integrated farming systems. Sustainable production begins with selecting healthy juveniles from reliable hatchery sources. Dependence on uncontrolled collection of wild juveniles can reduce natural populations and create inconsistent stocking quality. Hatchery-based seed production can provide farmers with more predictable stocking material while reducing pressure on natural recruitment.

Stocking density has a direct effect on crab growth, survival, water quality, and competition. Excessive density may increase aggression, cannibalism, competition for shelter, and deterioration of water conditions. Appropriate stocking levels should therefore be selected according to pond size, water exchange capacity, shelter availability, feeding practices, and the growth stage of the crabs. Regular observation can help farmers identify changes in behavior, feeding activity, mortality, and body condition. Adjustments can then be made before production losses become substantial.

Feed management is another major component of sustainable crab farming. Crabs require adequate protein, lipids, minerals, and other nutrients for growth, molting, tissue development, and reproduction. Traditional farming may depend heavily on low-cost raw materials such as fish and other aquatic organisms. Excessive use of these materials can increase feed costs and place pressure on fisheries. Alternative feed ingredients derived from agricultural products, plant materials, microbial biomass, insect sources, and processed aquatic by-products can reduce dependence on limited marine resources when their nutritional value and safety are suitable.

Feeding should be based on crab biomass, water temperature, feeding behavior, and production stage rather than applying the same quantity throughout the culture period. Uneaten feed decomposes and can increase ammonia, organic matter, and oxygen demand. Feeding trays or feeding platforms can help farmers observe consumption and remove remaining material. Regular adjustment of feeding quantities improves feed utilization and reduces waste. Feed conversion should be monitored because poor conversion can indicate excessive feeding, low feed quality, disease, unsuitable water conditions, or other production problems.

Water quality management is essential for maintaining healthy crab populations. Temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, pH, ammonia, nitrite, alkalinity, and turbidity can influence crab activity and growth. Sudden changes may cause physiological stress and reduce feeding. Farmers can maintain more stable conditions through suitable water exchange, aeration, sediment management, and careful control of feeding. Water should be introduced and discharged in a manner that minimizes the release of suspended solids and nutrient-rich effluent into surrounding ecosystems.

Pond sediment also deserves attention because organic residues can accumulate at the bottom during production. Uneaten feed, fecal material, molted shells, and other organic materials contribute to sediment loading. Excessive accumulation may affect oxygen availability near the pond bottom and increase the formation of undesirable compounds. Periodic removal or

Correspondence to: Munsu Wallraven, Department of Aquatic Systems, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia, E-mail: munsu.wallraven@pknu.ac.kr

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management of accumulated organic material can improve pond conditions. Sediment removed from ponds should be treated and used appropriately rather than being discharged directly into nearby waterways.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable crab production is therefore based on several connected practices rather than a single farming technique. Reliable seed, suitable stocking density, efficient feeding, stable water quality, adequate shelter, disease prevention, responsible waste management, habitat protection, and accurate production records can collectively improve farming performance. The most suitable approach will differ according to crab species, climate, farm design, market conditions, and available resources. Continued research into alternative feeds, hatchery production, environmental monitoring, selective breeding, and integrated culture systems can provide additional options for producers.