

# Komodo Fish Culture Project

## *Promoting Alternative Livelihoods and Market Transformation*

For generations, villagers living in and around Komodo have carefully harvested the sea's riches in sustainable ways. As economic pressures grow and resources diminish, Komodo's diverse reef fish populations are in danger of being depleted through over-fishing.

The Nature Conservancy is responding to these threats by working with local communities to develop a grassroots fish farming industry for prized fish. This project is designed to steer fishermen away from over-fishing and destructive fishing practices and engage them in sustainable fish culture. A thriving mariculture industry will reduce the pressure on coral reefs and substantially increase the standard of living for local villagers.

In March 2003, the Conservancy opened a mariculture facility near the park where a broodstock of adult fish provides eggs that are carefully grown to juvenile, or fingerling, size in hatchery tanks. When the fish reach the fingerling stage they will be transferred to grow-out farms maintained by community enterprises. There, the fishes will be raised to market size, ready for sale to live reef fish operators who will transport them to the restaurants of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China. The facility will produce mouse



Broodstock cage at the fish culture facility ©Donald Bason/The Nature Conservancy

grouper, tiger grouper, estuary grouper, sea bass and mangrove jack—five local species that are in high demand on the international market.

The Conservancy identified several communities interested in establishing grow-out farms, and is providing them with training in fish farming techniques. As the project grows, the Conservancy will begin working with additional communities and replicating the mariculture model in parts of the region.

A successful fish culture project will: 1) help protect Komodo's diverse corals and reef fish from destructive fishing practices and over-fishing; 2) provide coastal people

with a reliable source of income; 3) provide the live reef fish industry with a sustainable supply of fish bred in hatcheries.

A designated Man and Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site, Komodo National Park is one of the world's most biologically diverse and productive marine environments. The park encompasses nearly 700 square miles and is home to 1,000 fish species, 260 reef-building corals, giant clams, lobsters, turtles, whales, and dolphins.