

# **Processing cultured tropical sea cucumbers into export product: issues and opportunities**

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## **Abstract**

Sea cucumbers cultured in ponds or in the sea are potentially lucrative commodities, but their export value can be gained or lost through the processing used. The gutting, water temperature, cooking times, handling and drying techniques should all be carefully controlled in order to achieve the highest grade possible for export. Farmed sea cucumbers may have thinner body walls than wild animals, but have the advantage of being of consistent size, can be processed immediately after being removed from the water, and can be processed in bulk. Processors must understand the preferences of overseas importers, as desired processing approaches may vary. The use of fuel for boiling sea cucumber to make beche-de-mer can be an ecological concern. Body organs and muscle bands may offer new products for value-adding of cultured sea cucumbers. Likewise, markets are more open to fresh and canned product. Training and providing guides in the best methodologies and new market opportunities to processors present fruitful scope for improving the cost-effectiveness of farming and sea ranching tropical sea cucumbers.

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