

Strategies for Reduction of Poaching in Community-Based Holothurian Aquaculture

Antoine Rougier*, Alasdair Harris*, Mebrahtu Ateweberhan, Mialy Andriamahefazafy*

* NGO Blue Ventures

Abstract

The aquaculture of *Holothuria scabra* has been identified as a highly potential alternative livelihood for the coastal communities of Southwest Madagascar. Despite the fact that the projects, results continue to improve, poaching in the pens remains a major threat to the future sustainability of the sector. With well-established market prices and trade routes, the risk of theft is particularly high, and the success of such a project is dependent of the mitigation of this threat. In light of this Blue Ventures and its partners have developed several mechanisms to limit the risks of poaching. Through the promotion of a security guard system with the necessary tools, the design of legal tools based on local conventions within the Velondriake LMMA where the project is being implemented, and engaging the national authorities, theft management has been improved. Better results for farmers, and several cases in which thieves have been identified and persecuted can testify to the efficacy of better poaching management. However within a context of weak governance, high levels of corruption, and increasing illegal collection of holothurians, sea cucumber aquaculture continues to present challenges, especially when compared to other mariculture projects such as red seaweed farming, other potential coastal communities alternative livelihood. This presentation tackles this case study, provides tools for those interested in developing sea cucumber aquaculture, and raises awareness about the potential risks of poaching for the further development of the sector.