GROWTH OF THE HATCHERY-PRODUCED JUVENILE PEARL OYSTER *PINCTADA MAXIMA* (JAMESON) IN THE GULF OF THAILAND

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Hatchery-produced juveniles of *Pinctada maxima*, one year old, with 5.31 cm mean shell length. were grown in Prachuap Khiri Khan Bay in metal frame trays covered with 1inch mesh size nylon net. The trays were hung from bamboo rafts to about 1.5 m below the surface. In the culture area, sea water temperature ranged from 26-34 °C and salinity from 30-35 ‰. The cultured pearl oysters attained the mean sizes of 11.8, 14.9, and 15.8 cm shell length at the age of two, three, and four years respectively. The mean growth rates were 6.5, 2.3, and 1.7 cm per year in the first, second and third year of the culture period, and the survival rates were 75.0, 4,4.9, and 51.6% respectively. Growth of the pearl oysters obtained from this study was rather poor compared to natural growth. Problems due to heavy fouling and unsatisfactory enYironmental conditions are discussed.

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