

Philippines launches crayfish hub to power aquaculture growth

24 November 2025 | News

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The Philippines has taken a significant step toward becoming a global leader in aquaculture with the launch of the country's largest crayfish nursery. This flagship project, developed by Farm Fresh Early Catch Inc. in collaboration with Taiwan's Da Shin Biotech Ltd. and the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR), marks a major milestone in the nation's aquaculture industry.

The new facility will mass-produce Australian Redclaw crayfish (*Cherax quadricarinatus*), a high-value species prized for its rapid growth, robust hardiness, and strong market demand. Officials said the project advances both the country's food security agenda and its drive to create sustainable livelihoods for rural communities.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr., in remarks delivered by DA Assistant Secretary and spokesman Arnel de Mesa, said the initiative shows what coordinated action across sectors can achieve.

"Built through the partnership of Farm Fresh Early Catch Inc., Da Shin Biotech, and the DA-BFAR, this nursery shows that when government, private innovators, and fisherfolk come together, progress stops being a dream—it becomes our shared reality," he said.

Tiu Laurel stressed that crayfish farming "opens new doors for our fisherfolk—bringing in more income, more livelihood, and more food on our tables," adding that each pond must also "nurture care, discipline, and respect for the balance of our ecosystems." He noted that BFAR has set strict guidelines to protect native aquatic life.

Located in Candaba—long known for its freshwater resources—the 1,280-square-meter nursery houses 16 tanks capable of producing 48,000 fry every two weeks. The facility also pioneers water-recycling technology in Philippine crayfish nurseries,

reducing wastewater and conserving freshwater in an industry often criticized for its consumption footprint.

The nursery will supply Farm Fresh's existing 3-hectare grow-out ponds, which currently yield 30 tons of market-size crayfish annually, and will support partner growers as the industry scales.

Starting 2026, Farm Fresh plans a massive rollout of grow-out operations: 1,500 hectares in Luzon, 750 hectares each in the Visayas and Mindanao. Once fully operational, these sites are projected to produce more than 1,200 tons of crayfish every six months—volumes that would position the Philippines as a serious contender in regional and global markets.

Crayfish offer a protein source that is nutrient-rich, low-impact, and requires minimal feed. The project is expected to create more than 3,000 direct jobs and spur new enterprises across farming communities.

The launch of the nursery kicks off a world-class, sustainable crayfish industry that aims to put the Philippines firmly on the global aquaculture map