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RESEARCH ARTICLE.....

Weaning of *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* larvae from *Artemia nauplii* to fish gel food

B.B. SAHU, B.R. PILLAI, G. PATRA, P.L. LALRINSANGA, S. FEROSEKHAN AND P. JAYASANKAR

ABSTRACT..... A high moisture (80-85%), fish gel food (FGF) containing 97 per cent fish gel dispersion, sodium alginate, vitamins, mineral and micronutrient supplement was compared to newly hatched live *Artemia nauplii* as an exclusive diet for the culture of larval freshwater prawn *Macrobrachium rosenbergii*. *M. rosenbergii* larvae were gradually weaned from *Artemia nauplii* to fish gel food (FGF) at their different stages. The feeding regime (AGIOG) in which larvae were weaned on to FGF resulted in the highest ($P < 0.05$) yield of 22.65 ± 6.87 per cent PL/L. After day 11, the survival of larvae fed *Artemia* alone (A) regimen decreased and at day 25, the value ($67.16 \pm 4.62\%$ with a corresponding production rate of 20.15 ± 1.88 PL/l) was significantly lower ($P < 0.5$) than those of larvae fed the diets AG10G and AG 8G. The larvae fed with the weaning diets developed faster at later stages than those fed *Artemia* alone. FGF is composed of readily available ingredients, the diet contains 73.83 per cent crude protein, and 7.24 per cent ether extract, is easy to prepare, and has good water stability and buoyancy. The characteristics of diet suggest good potential for successful use in larvae culture.

Author for Corresponding -

B.B. SAHU
Central Institute of Freshwater
Aquaculture, Kausalyaganga,
BHUBANESWAR (ODISHA) INDIA
Email: binodsahu@gmail.com

See end of the article for
Coopted authors'

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