

## **Status of the Marine Ornaments Export Industry in Sri Lanka**

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The marine aquarium industry in Sri Lanka has become a popular industry during the past few years. Exporters have shown an increasing trend for marine ornamental species exporting due to globally increased demand. Therefore, a study was designed to assess the present situation of the marine ornamental industry in Sri Lanka. Pretested questionnaire-based survey with visual observations of the exporting process was conducted by selecting 30 leading marine ornaments exporting companies to assess the situation of the industry. Export data that were gathered from Sri Lanka Customs were analyzed using descriptive analysis methods. The analysis figured that approximately 611,310 marine fish individuals in 2017 and 459,425 individuals in 2018 have been exported from Sri Lanka. Thus, 151,885 individuals of prominent decrease have been observed in exporting marine ornamental fish due to the reduction of fish catch from the wild. However, a prominent growth (49,468) has been observed in exporting marine invertebrates as 105,750 individuals in 2017 and 155,218 individuals in 2018. These ornamentals have the highest demand in the USA (336,452) followed by Japan (143,497) and UK (25,386). As per the regions, the North American region had the highest demand for marine fish approximately 406,470 individuals totally in both years and followed by the North Asian region by exporting 290,916 individuals. Family Gobidae (21.6%) was the most demanded fish family in the export market followed by family Serranidae (11.7%) Acanthuridae (10.7%), and Labridae (7.7%). Most demanded invertebrate family was Hippolitidae (83.9%) followed by family Rhynchocinedae (9.0%). However, these targeting particular species in wild capture fishery may highly affect to collapse the balance of Sri Lankan reef ecosystems. Therefore, suitable strategies should be immediately implemented to fulfill the huge demand in the exporting market while sustainably utilizing natural resources.

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