

***IN VITRO* PROPAGATION AND
PHOTOBIOREACTOR CULTIVATION OF
COMMERCIALY IMPORTANT SEAWEED,
Kappaphycus alverazii IN SABAH.**

TING SIEW HOO



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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE**

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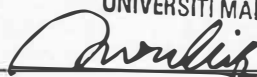
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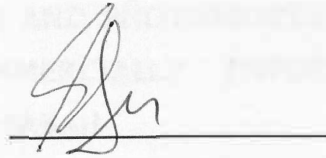
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ABSTRACT

In Sabah, there was a problem for conventional farming of *Kappaphycus alvarezii*, where after seasonal variations and disease infestations, there was lack of healthy seedlings for next cultivation. *In vitro* tissue culture techniques can solve this problem and facilitate the propagation of commercially important genotypes which are healthy and fast growing. This research was carried out to optimize the suitable conditions for the propagation of *Kappaphycus alvarezii*. Culture media, explants weight over volume concentration, aeration activity and light illuminance were found to be the critical factors that affect the growth of *Kappaphycus alvarezii*. The optimum conditions for culturing seaweeds were found to be initial explants of 0.5 to 1.0 of weight in gram over 100ml media, 50 % PES media enrichment and supplemented with 2.5 g/l BAP and 1.0g/l IAA, light intensity of 6,000 lux, continuous aeration and temperature of 24 to 27°C. In order to achieve mass cultivation of seedlings, a customized airlift photobioreactor was constructed to provide the optimal culture conditions to the seaweed cultivation. The percentage of increase in fresh cultures per day for 60 days in the photobioreactor ($6.0 \text{ \% (g g}^{-1}\text{d}^{-1}\text{)}$) was found to be higher than the growth rate obtained from the culturing flask ($4.26 \text{ \% (g g}^{-1}\text{d}^{-1}\text{)}$) and the cultivation in sea ($5.5 \text{ \% (g g}^{-1}\text{d}^{-1}\text{)}$). A study involving the profiling of protein expression between sea cultivated seaweed and clonally propagated seaweed revealed that short peptides with a molecular mass of 5-10 kDa were produced in significant amounts in naturally cultivated seaweeds but stop production during the first 12 week of laboratory culture. These peptides were revealed to be in the class of Lectin by MALTIDOF method. The reappearance of this peptide after 12 weeks of cultivation may indicate that the propagules are ready to be transferred to the natural environment as they possess defence systems for adaptation to the wild. Thus, Lectins can be applied as a biomarker to monitor the quality of seaweed cultures *in vitro* and this biomarker can be highly beneficial to the seaweed farming industry.

ABSTRAK

IN VITRO PROPAGASI DAN KULTIVASI FOTOBIOREAKTOR *Kappaphycus alverazii* YANG BERKEPENTINGAN KOMERSIAL DI SABAH

Di Sabah, terdapat satu masalah untuk perladangan konvensional bagi *Kappaphycus alverazii* di mana selepas variasi musim dan serangan penyakit, terdapat kekurangan benih yang sihat untuk kultivasi seterusnya. Teknik tisu kultur *in vitro* boleh mengatasi masalah ini dan memudahkan propagasi genotip berkepentingan komersial yang sihat dan pertumbuhan pantas. Penyelidikan ini telah dilakukan untuk mengoptimumkan keadaan yang sesuai untuk propagasi *Kappaphycus alverazii*. Media kultur, kepekatan berat kepada isipadu eksplan, kaedah pengudaraan, dan iluminasi cahaya telah dikenal pasti sebagai factor kritikal yang mempengaruhi tumbesaran *Kappaphycus alverazii*. Keadaan optimum untuk pengkulturan rumpai laut ini telah dikenal pasti adalah dengan eksplan awal antara 0.5 kepada 1.0 daripada jisim dalam gram untuk 100 ml media, dikayakan dengan media PES 50 % dan ditambah dengan 2.5 g/l BAP dan 1.0 g/l IAA, intensiti cahaya pada 6,000 lux, pengudaraan berterusan dan suhu di antara 24 dan 27 °C. Untuk mencapai pengeluaran benih rumpai laut secara besar-besaran, satu fotobioreaktor pengudaraan dibina supaya keadaan kultur optimum dapat disesuaikan untuk pengkulturan rumpai laut ini. Kadar tumbesaran di dalam photobioreaktor (6.0% (W/d)) didapati adalah lebih tinggi daripada kadar tumbesaran di dalam kelalang kon (4.2% (W/d)) dan penanaman di tapak semaian laut (5.5 % (W/d)). Selain itu, satu kajian melibatkan profil ekspresi protein antara rumpai laut dikultivasi di laut dengan rumpai laut yang dipropagasi secara klonal mendapati terdapat peptida yang pendek dengan berat molekul antara 5-10 kDA ditemui dengan banyak di rumpai laut yang dikultivasi secara semula jadi tetapi didapati hilang pada 12 minggu pertama untuk rumpai laut yang dipropagasi di makmal. Peptida ini telah dikenalpasti sebagai Lectin dengan kaedah MALTIDOF. Kemunculan peptida ini selepas minggu ke-12 kultivasi menunjukkan propagul berkenaan boleh dipindahkan ke tapak semaian semula jadi kerana memiliki sistem pertahanan untuk mengadaptasi keadaan semula jadi. Maka dengan itu Lectin boleh diaplikasikan sebagai biopenanda untuk mengawasi kualiti kultur rumpai laut *in vitro* dan biopenanda ini boleh memberi manfaat kepada industri perladangan rumpai laut ini.

LIST OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE	i
DECLARATION	ii
CERTIFICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ABSTRAK	vi
LIST OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xvi
LIST OF APPENDIX	xviii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background	1
1.2	Problem Statement	2
1.3	Objectives	2
1.4	Significance of Study	3

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	<i>Seaweed Background</i>	4
2.1.1	Background of <i>Kappaphycus alvarezii</i>	6
2.1.2	Agronomy of <i>Kappaphycus alvarezii</i>	8
2.1.3	Conventional Cultivation of <i>Kappaphycus</i> Seaweed	9
2.1.4	Common Varieties of Cultivated <i>Eucheuma</i> and <i>Kappaphycus</i>	10
2.1.5	Major Challenges in <i>Kappaphycus alvarezii</i> Cultivation	11
2.1.6	Commercial Value of <i>Kappaphycus alvarezii</i> Seaweed	13
2.2	Micropropagation of <i>Kappaphycus alvarezii</i>	15
2.2.1	Explant Preparation and Selection	15

2.2.2	Explant Sterilization Methods	15
2.2.3	Explants Size, Media and Growth Regulators	18
2.2.4	Light Intensity and Temperature	19
2.2.5	Other Factors	24
2.3	Photobioreactor for Seaweed Cultivation	25
2.3.1	Importance and Characteristics of Photobioreactor in Marine Aquaculture	25
2.3.2	Cultivation of Microalgae and Seaweeds in Photobioreactor	26
2.3.3	Challenges of Seaweeds Cultivation in Photobioreactor	28
2.3.4	Photobioreactor and Bioactive Production	30
2.4	Protein Expression in Tissue Cultures	31
2.4.1	Protein Analysis	31
2.4.2	Protein Separation by SDS PAGE	32
2.4.3	SDS-PAGE on Seaweeds	33
2.4.4	Protein sequencing of Seaweeds	34
CHAPTER 3: MATERIALS AND METHODS		
3.1	Sample Collection and Preparation	35
3.1.1	Study Sites	35
3.1.2	Sample Preparation	35
3.1.3	Acclimatization of explants	36
3.2	Micropropagation of <i>K. alvarezii</i>	37
3.2.1	Determination of Sterilization Methods	37
3.2.2	Determination of Initial Culture Concentration (W/v)	39
3.2.3	Determination of Media Type	40
3.2.4	Determination of Hormone Concentration	44
3.2.5	Determination of Light Intensity, Temperature and Aeration	44
3.2.6	Growth Performance of <i>K. alvarezii</i> under optimized parameters in Flask Scale	46

3.3	Seaweed Cultivation in Customized Photobioreactor	47
3.3.1	Customization of Photobioreactor	47
3.3.2	Combination and Verification of Optimized Parameters	53
3.3.3	Analysis of Growth Performance between Flask Scale, Photobioreactor and Farm Scale	54
3.4	Protein Analysis of tissue cultured and wild <i>K. alverazii</i> by SDS Page	54
3.4.1	Preparation Protein Sample	54
3.4.2	Preparation of electrophoresis gel	55
3.4.3	Electrophoresis	56
3.4.4	Total Protein Staining of Electrophoretic Gels	57
3.4.5	Protein Identification by MALDITOF Method	58
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION		
4.1	Sample Preparation	59
4.2	Surface Sterilization for <i>K. alverazii</i> Seaweed	59
4.3	Optimization of <i>In Vitro</i> Micropropagation of <i>K.alverazii</i>	64
4.3.1	Initial Culture Concentration (W/v) of explants	64
4.3.2	Type of Media	67
4.3.3	Hormone Concentration	69
4.3.4	Light Intensity	71
4.3.5	Aeration Activity	72
4.3.6	Temperature Range	74
4.3.7	<i>K. alverazii</i> under Optimized Parameters in Flask Scale	75
4.4	Cultivation of <i>K. alverazii</i> in Customized Photobioreactor	76
4.4.1	Growth performance of <i>K. alverazii</i> under optimized parameters	76
4.4.2	Comparison between growth rate of <i>K. alverazii</i> in flask and photobioreactor	77

4.5 SDS PAGE on *K. alverazii* 80

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION 85

REFERENCES 88

APPENDICES 98



LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1 Differences between <i>iota</i> -carrageenan and <i>kappa</i> -carrageenan	6
Table 2.2 Different names between <i>Eucheuma</i> and <i>Kappaphycus</i>	10
Table 2.3 Antibiotics reference	17
Table 2.4 Water analysis data of deep seawater and surface Seawater	20
Table 3.1 Weight range of the explants to the number of explants in 100 mL of media	40
Table 3.2 Quantity of chemicals required for preparation of 1 litre PES enrichment stock	41
Table 3.3 Weight of chemicals required for preparation of 1 litre Iron-EDTA solution	41
Table 3.4 Weight of chemicals required for preparation of 1 litre PII trace metal solution	41
Table 3.5 Concentration of stock solutions (g/L H ₂ O) with volume required to prepare 1 L of VS 50% Media	42
Table 3.6 Volume of chemicals required for preparation of 1 L of f/2 50% medium	42
Table 3.7 Volume of chemicals required for preparation of 1 L trace metal solution for f/2 50% medium	43

Table 3.8	Chemical compositions for Denaturing Buffers (DB)	55
Table 3.9	Chemical compositions for loading gel	56
Table 3.10	Chemical compositions for running gel	56
Table 3.11	Chemical compositions for 10X Running Buffer (Laemmli electrolyte buffer)	57
Table 4.1	Surface sterilization of explants with different concentration of disinfectants at different time	61
Table 4.2	Determination of different concentration of antibiotics in surface sterilization of explants to obtain aseptically explants	63



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LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1 Global aquaculture production of <i>Eucheuma</i> spp.	5
Figure 2.2 Polyacrylamide formation by chemical polymerization.	33
Figure 3.1 Maps for the location of Pulau Sebangkat, located North East to Semporna Town.	35
Figure 3.2 Different strains collected for acclimatization in the lab.	36
Figure 3.3 Acclimitization of seaweed freshly collected from the farm.	37
Figure 3.4 Cutting of explants in Lamina Air Flow.	39
Figure 3.5 Kyoritsu Luxmeter.	45
Figure 3.6 Reactor for cultivation of <i>K. alverazii</i> .	47
Figure 3.7 Schematic diagram of the three dimensional view of the positioning of florescent light, reactor and the stack.	48
Figure 3.8 Lighting rack.	48
Figure 3.9 Reactor and other component exposed to UV light for two hours to sterilize	49
Figure 3.10 Cover of the photobioreactor made of stainless steel with 4 inlets.	50
Figure 3.11 Aquarium pump pumping the air into the photobioreactor.	50

Figure 3.12	Schematic diagram of the front view of an airlift photobioreactor showing the movement of bubbles and flow of medium.	51
Figure 3.13	Additional external cooling fan to dissipate the heat produced from the florescence light.	52
Figure 3.14	Folding of the layer of polymer acts as net separator for attachment of explants.	52
Figure 3.15	Schematic diagram of the front view of the positioning of separator net with explants attached.	53
Figure 4.1	Tambalang strain survive in acclimatization in the lab.	59
Figure 4.2	Dead explants.	60
Figure 4.3	Axenic explants and contaminated explants.	62
Figure 4.4	<i>K. alverzii</i> cultured on petri dish.	63
Figure 4.5	Daily growth rates (%) <i>K. alverzii</i> cultured with different number of explants for 4 weeks.	65
Figure 4.6	Initial culture number of explants with six pieces.	65
Figure 4.7	Daily growth rate (%) of <i>K. alverzii</i> cultured with different culture concentration (% W/v).	66
Figure 4.8	Daily growth rates of <i>K. alverzii</i> cultured with different media for 4 weeks.	68

Figure 4.9	Daily growth rates of <i>K. alverazii</i> cultured with different combination of hormones in PES 50 %.	70
Figure 4.10	Daily growth rates of <i>K. alverazii</i> cultured with different light intensity for 4 weeks.	72
Figure 4.11	Daily growth rates of <i>K. alverazii</i> cultured with different aeration time interval for 4 weeks.	73
Figure 4.12	Daily growth rates of <i>K. alverazii</i> cultured with different temperature range for 4 weeks.	75
Figure 4.13	<i>K. alverazii</i> cultured in photobioreactor	76
Figure 4.14	Comparison of daily growth rate for <i>K. alverazii</i> cultured in seaweed farm, culture flask and photobioreactor.	77
Figure 4.15	Propagated <i>K. alverazii</i> .	79
Figure 4.16	SDS PAGE comparison of <i>K. alverazii</i> from sea and tissue culture.	80
Figure 4.17	SDS PAGE for <i>K. alverazii</i> cultured for 30, 60 and 90 days.	82

LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATION

%	percentage
>	greater than
<	less than
≤	less than or equal to
≈	almost equal to
°C	degree Celsius
μg	microgram
μl	microliter
μM	micromolar
μmol	micromol
cm	centimetre
BAP	benzylaminopurine
BSA	bovine serum albumin
CO₂	carbon dioxide
d	day
DGR	daily growth rate
E	east
HDL	high density lipoprotein
g	gram
H₂O	water
HP	horse power
IAA	indole acetic acid
hr	hour
kb	kilobase
kDa	kilodalton
L	litre
LDL	low density lipoprotein
m	meter
M	molar
MgCl₂	magnesium chloride
Mpa	megapascal

mg	milligram
min	minute
ml	milliliter
mm	millimeter
mM	millimolar
nm	nanometer
N	north
O₂	oxygen
rpm	revolution per minute
PUFA	polyunsaturated fatty acid
ppm	parts per million
sec	second
spp.	species
U	unit
v	volume
V	voltage
vs	versus
W	weight



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LIST OF APPENDIX

	Page
Appendix A The <i>K. alverazii</i> Collected from the Farm	98
Appendix B Materials for Micropropagation of <i>K. alverazii</i>	98
Appendix C The <i>K. alverazii</i> Cultured in the Flask	99
Appendix D Early Trial of <i>K. alverazii</i> Cultured in Simple Photobioreactor	105
Appendix E The <i>K. alverazii</i> Cultured in the Photobioreactor	107



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In Malaysia, the seaweed farming sector has developed enormously over the past few years with the help of government's subsidy. *Kappaphycus spp.* have been successfully established and cultivated in farm around Sabah, Malaysia. However the growth rate of the number of seaweed's farm is not satisfactory in order to help to curb the poverty among the fishermen in the East Sabah coastal region. Department Of Fishery Sabah has been providing many incentives including materials, seedlings, suitable site identifications and trainings to gain the interest of more fishermen to be involves in the seaweed farming. Workshops and discussions are conducted on a continuous basis to the local farmer for the development of seaweed industry (Department of Fisheries (DOF) Sabah, 2010).

In Sabah, the long line system is more widely practiced due to the economical and practically easy to handle as compared to other systems. This method was known as tie-tie cultivation method using raffia string elongated along two floats or poles. Seedlings are planted by tying up on the raffia string and harvesting as done by cutting of the branches that have grown. Poor post-harvest handling methods were known to cause the degradation of carrageenan content in the raw materials. Meanwhile the old thallus that was left to regenerate has the issue of genes degeneration, easily infested by disease from the cut area and indirectly affects the quality of seaweeds produced.

In order for Sabah to develop the capacity of increased seaweed production, researchers are trying to apply modern biotechnological processes in order to develop novel technology for the production of high quality seaweed seedlings, which feature high gel strength, faster growth rate and resistant to disease. Thus development of more advance technology, such as micropropagation and bioreactors may be one of the solutions to enhance the

seaweed production in Malaysia.

1.2 Problem Statement

The cultivation of *Kappaphycus* and *Eucheuma* seaweed in Sabah depends greatly on suitable monsoon seasons. The threat increases as seaweeds cultured in Sabah faces diseases such as 'ice-ice' and endophytes. The total production for both seaweed species are of 111,298 tonnes wet weight in 2008, however the national target of 250,000 tonnes wet weight is yet to be achieved by 2010 (Department of Fisheries (DOF) Sabah, 2010). Due to the axenic growth conditions of these seedlings in tissue culture, diseases such as 'ice-ice' and endophytes can be prevented. The micropropagation of seaweed in tissue culture offers an alternative to provide healthy and fast growing seedlings. This project, therefore, aims to develop a protocol for successful micropropagation of the commercially important *Kappaphycus alverazii*. From this protocol, mass production of seedlings for the seaweed can be done in more controlled environment with photobioreactor.

1.3 Objectives

The research objectives of this research are as follows:

- a. To establish the sterilization method for preparation of axenic *Kappaphycus spp.* explants for *in vitro* micropropagation.
- b. To optimize parameters such as explants size, basal media, phytohormones concentrations, light intensity, temperature and aeration for thallus regeneration of *Kappaphycus spp.*
- c. To evaluate and compare the growth performance of *in vitro* micropropagated *Kappaphycus spp.* in tissue culture flasks and customized photobioreactor.
- d. To analyse and compare the proteins profiles generated from different ages of micropropagated seaweed cultures and farm cultivated species using SDS-PAGE.

1.4 Significance of Study

The problem in seaweed micropropagation was lack of optimized protocols to obtain axenic cultures and propagation in appropriate media and plant growth regulators (Collantes and Melo, 1995). This study aims to obtain axenic explants and optimize parameters for thallus regeneration. *Kappaphycus* spp. propagation will be studied and the focus of the research is to find a way for mass production of seedlings. Conditions of the propagation provided are simulated by the Sabah's sea and weather conditions which are favourable to this species. Thus initial studies on the culture conditions of this species are required. Through *in vitro* micropropagation, the bulk of seedlings will be cultivated in the rich media and consequently acclimatized in the open sea. Reddy *et al.* (2003) reported that seaweeds from tissue culture can achieve growth rates of 1.5 to 1.8 times higher than the field plants when cultivated in sea farms. Tissue culture of seaweeds is thus viable as healthy and fast growing strains and can be selected for farming and subsequently contribute towards the development of seaweed farming in Sabah. In addition, protein profiles will be determined and compared between different ages of micropropagated seaweeds to search for the indicator that can determine the quality of the seaweeds whether they are suitable to be planted to the sea.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1 Seaweed Background

The use of seaweed as food has been traced back to the 4th century in Japan and the 6th century in China. The seaweed aquaculture production which consists of 92% of the world seaweed supplies is estimated at 11.3 million tonnes and US\$5.7 billion whereas 99.7% being provided by Asian countries (Chopin and Sawhney, 2008). China is the largest producer of edible seaweeds and most of them are *Laminaria japonica* which contributes to the production of kombu. The Republic of Korea produces about 800,000 tonnes of various species with 50 % of *Undaria pinnatifida* which contribute to the production of wakame. Japanese production is around 600,000 tonnes with 75 % of *Porphyra* species which contribute to the production of nori (Dennis, 2003).

Seaweed cultivation started during the Tokugawa (or Edo) Era (AD 1600–1868) in Japan (Chopin and Sawhney, 2008). As the demand for raw material increases, natural seaweeds populations became over exploited. Many wild seaweed populations were lost from its natural habitat and the need for farm cultivation was required. Nowadays, about 90 % of the world seaweed supply is harvested from the cultivated species (Dennis, 2003). Depending on the species and their life cycle, the cultivation technology can be done with a lower cost or highly advanced and mechanized with on-land cultivation of seedlings prior to transfer into the open-sea aquaculture sites (Chopin and Sawhney, 2008).

Besides food, alginate, agar and carrageenan are thickening and gelling agents extracted from seaweeds and widely used in food production and pharmaceutical industries. Culturing seaweeds as a source of hydrocolloids started in 1658 when the agar with gelling properties was first extracted from red seaweed in Japan. Carrageenan extracted from Irish moss, red seaweed was popular in 19th century as thickening agents. Meanwhile, alginate was extracted

from brown algae and sold as thickening and gelling agents since 1930s. Industrial uses of these three seaweed extracts expanded rapidly after World War II but were sometimes limited by the availability of raw materials (Dennis, 2003).

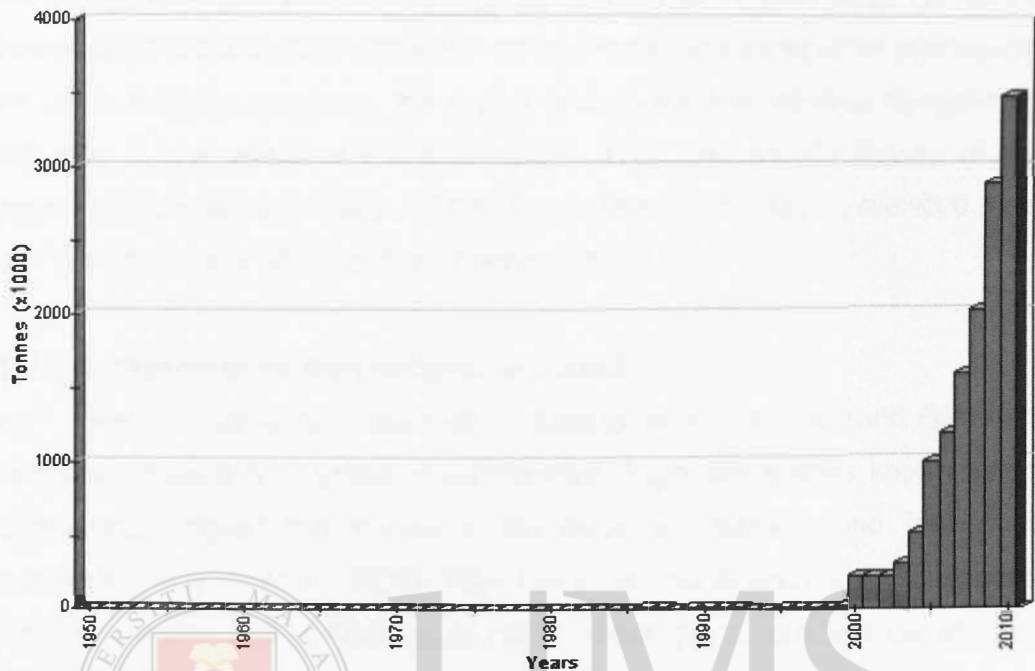


Figure 2.1: Global aquaculture production of *Eucheuma* spp.

Source: FAO Fishery Statistic (2010)

According to FAO Fishery Statistic in 2010 (Figure 1.1), aquaculture production for *Eucheuma* spp. started since the 1950's but in insignificant amounts. Only until 2000 when the government policy in the Asia pacific regions allocate funds to increase the production through research and development of more sustainable farming. Today approximately one million tonnes of wet seaweed are harvested annually and extracted to produce 55,000 tonnes hydrocolloids with the total value of US\$ 585 million (Dennis, 2003). Alginate which valued US\$ 213 million in 2010 is extracted from wild brown seaweeds as the cultivation of brown seaweeds is too expensive to provide raw material for industrial uses (Dennis, 2003). Agar valued amount of US\$ 132 million in 2010 is produced from red seaweed, which has been cultivated since 1960-70s (Dennis, 2003). Larger scale cultivation since 1990 has thus allowed the expansion of the agar industry. Carrageenan production valued amount of US\$ 240 million in 2010 was originally dependent on wild seaweeds, especially Irish moss, a small alga growing in cold