Prospects of Thriv

Favorable Temperature Said Big Acadia

GSRI Developments to Spur Venture

NEW ORLEANS, La. — South Louisiana could become as fa-

mous nationally as an expert of catfish as it is now for its hot-

ter pepper suc. Development, according to South Research Institute lexicale.

Dr. James H. Stone, director of GSRI's Department of Envi-
rnenmental Sciences, and Keith Price, a staff member, recently
gave a paper at a meeting of the Cajun Growers Association
at Lake, Miss. The address entitled "Agriculture in Com-
mercial Fish ponds by the Anaerobic Process" caused great in-

terest. Since this method could lead to a substantial increase in

pounds of marketable fish per acre.

During the months of August and September, commercial

ponds are very susceptible to massive fish kills because of

low oxygen content of the wa-

ter, since the fish are very

large at this time and require

much more oxygen than when

they are 2 to 10 inch fingerlings.

Stone's invention would help to poll the fish through this criti-

cal period, thus allowing for a

higher production density. Stone

has shown that a single air gun

will increase the dissolved oxy-
gen content of a six-acre pond

by 25 per cent after only 50

minutes of operation. The fish are

relatively inexpensive, easy

to operate and can be transport-
ed easily from pond to pond.

Stone said a thriving catfish

industry could be established in

Acadiana since the temperature

is more favorable than in prin-
tcipal catfish producing areas of

northern Louisiana, Arkansas,

and Mississippi. Total ac-

cuma in those latter areas is 45,000

with about 20 acres of fish

ponds being constructed each

year. Average gross revenue

per acre is $10, of which $8 is

profit.

Some believe that the princi-

pal factors limiting growth of a

catfish farming industry in south

Louisiana is a surplus market

for wild catfish which year

which satisfies fish demand, and a

lack of a modern processing plant to process fish for export.

However, there are numer-

ous advantages to catfish ponds

since the fish are raised in

clean, well water and fed corn

such as rice and corn. The re-

sult is a fish that has been

grain-fed to the peak of taste

and, similar to corn-fed beef. The fish are also free of the

off-flavor often observed in

wild fish which are exposed to

industrial and agricultural pol-

lutants.

Dr. T. J. Steffenhagen and

Paul Wardi of GSRI's De-

partment of Technology are now

conducting a study of the pre-

sence of partially processed catfish. The levels found are

generally low although Stone

exception, probably caused by

the presence of the fish in the

commercial feed or location of

the ponds too close to crop

lands greeted with particular

Steffenhagen said a problem

could be avoided entirely by

employing an analysis for nutri-

tials before purchasing feed and selecting better loca-

tions for ponds.

Keith Price, member of

GSRI's Environmental Sciences

Department, has operated a cat-

fish farm in his spare time and

raises fingerling fingerlings

and feed sized fish. The finger-

lings are reared between males

and females from two different

geographical areas and are sold

to operators of ponds who do not

have the capability of breeding their own fish.

Price and price research

are required to increase the pro-

fitability of producing pond catfish.

Areas requiring attention are

lower cost feed, prevention of fish diseases, improved breed-

ing stock, method of preserving sperm of supreme males for

future breeding as is now done with cattle, and better utiliza-

tion of processing waste fish. However, even with present

knowledge, catfish farming can be very profitable.

Dr. H. P. Burchfield, scientific

director of GSRI, hoped cat-

fish farming would be the third

new industry the local institute

has helped bring to Acadiana.

The first was Thermo-Kinetixx,

a division of Kohart Manufac-

turing Inc., which was estab-

lished at Acadiana Regional

Airport to manufacture a micro-

creamer oven developed by

Mark Hansen of GSRI. The

second was Gulf International, a

manufacturer of custom built

boats.

Burchfield notes that with the

establishment of a catfish farm

by Price a third phase looks

and while it does not offer a

discernable economic impact to

the area, it signifies that GSRI

has developed a practical as

well as a laboratory capability

for helping catfish farmers to

become established in this area.

Services which GSRI is now

qualified to offer to potential

farm operators in Louisiana in-

clude consultation on general

management and culture prob-

lems, identification of catfish di-

seases and water and feed prob-

lems.

The Economics Department of

GSRI in Baton Rouge could of-

fer substantial assistance in se-

curing risks and markets. Un-

oubtedly this situation war-

rants consideration of a major

catfish processing plant for Ar-

dianians as well as the establish-

ment of numerous commercial

ponds.

With efficient pond operation,

catfish processing and market-

ing, South Louisiana indeed lies

on the brink of a third grow-

ning industry.