



Sixth pre-CIBJO Congress 2024 Special Report released, looks at impact of scientific research on pearl industry



MILAN, ITALY: September 25, 2024 – With fewer than six weeks to go to the opening of the 2024 CIBJO Congress in Shanghai, China, on November 2, 2024, the sixth of the pre-congress Special Reports has been released. Prepared by the CIBJO Pearl Commission, headed by Kenneth Scarratt, the report looks at environmental and biochemical research being carried out on pearls and in the waters in which the pearl oysters live, and the likely impact that the knowledge gained will have on pearl farming, marketing and the quality of the product itself.

As it did in 2023, the report considers the effects of microplastics that pollute the waters both in the wild and the vicinity of pearling farms, and which have been detected in sediments and in the oysters themselves. In culturing areas, Mr. Scarratt notes, important evidence has been collected that indicates that exposure to microplastics may impact the appearance of biominerals and the expression of biomineralisation-related genes, which pose a new potential threat to aquatic organisms.

“There is still much to learn from the enormous body of work being published, but given the already significant pollution challenges within our oceans and waterways it might be prudent to continually monitor the presence of MPs within pearling waters and also report the disposal of fishing gear and plastics in general, from which the MPs originate,” he writes.

In his contribution to the report, sustainable value expert Pierre Fallourd looks at what he describes as regenerative pearl farming. “The environmental impact of marine pearl farming varies greatly between species and locations, often as a result of farming operations. In the aquatic environment, the oysters farmed will also provide benefits to the ecosystems in which they grow, and these are values that can be included in studies of the impacts of the life cycle of production of a pearl,” he notes.

Another contributor to the report is Peter Bracher, Executive Director at the Paspaley Pearling Company, who describes the impact on pearl production of Australia’s strict conservation policies. “Although the pearl trade is aware of the regulation of Australia’s industry, there is a common misconception that production can be increased to meet demand when the market is strong,” he points out. “In reality, the annual catch rate is determined solely on the basis of sustainability and without regard to market conditions. Because of the long husbandry period of two to three years, production increases can only occur over an extended period.”

Contributions to the report were also made by DANAT (Bahrain Institute for Pearls & Gemstones), the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), and Ryuichiro Machizawa, General Manager at K. Mikimoto & Co. in Japan.

To download a full copy of the CIBJO Pearl Commission’s 2024 Special Report, [PLEASE CLICK HERE.](#)

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