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## Turtle 'Farming' Studied

By BOB BARR

HONOLULU (AP) — The sea is a potential source of nourishment for the world's hungry millions, but a University of Hawaii marine biologist is working to please the palates of gourmets, too.

George Balazs of the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology is studying 130 green sea turtle hatchlings, to find out what the tasty turtles eat and how long it takes them to grow to platter size.

"Initially, we would only be able to supply turtles for the gourmet market," Balazs said, "but later on it may have a potential for the mass market."

The green sea turtle is prized for its veal-like flesh, its calipee — cartilage — that produces the sticky texture demanded of the best turtle soup and its flippers, which make stew.

Turtle steak sells for \$2 a pound on the West Coast, and calipee will fetch twice that price, Balazs said.

### Grow to 150 Pounds

Balazs is feeding the two-inch-long hatchlings varying diets of vegetable matter to determine the optimum amounts of protein and calories. One group gets a meat diet.

The one-ounce hatchlings must grow to about 150 pounds before they're ready for market, and Balazs said 80 per cent of a mature turtle is marketable, including the shell and the leather from the neck and flippers.

Before turtle farming becomes a reality, the turtles must prove they will breed on artificial beaches. And Balazs' initial experiments have not been encouraging.

Three nests of turtle eggs were transplanted from the French Frigate Shoals, in the western part of the Hawaiian island chain, to a small island near Honolulu. Two nests were not fertile, and only eight turtles hatched from the 76 fertile eggs.

In the wild, about half the eggs normally hatch, Balazs said.

Balazs said the five days moving time from the shoals to Honolulu may have arrested the development of the eggs. So he plans to bring more eggs to Honolulu with the moving time cut to one day.