

Challenges Faced by Fisher Women of South India specific

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Abstract

Women play a vital role in the operation of India's fisheries, which provide needed protein for the countries' people as well as seafood exports. Fisherwomen link producers and consumers via their involvement in every aspect of postharvest handling, processing, and marketing. Increased competition, declining resources and difficult working conditions make their work challenging. While fresh fish marketing and traditional fish processing remain the preferred activities of fisher women in southern states. However with available post harvest jobs, the constraints facing fisherwomen who want to advance their socioeconomic status beyond the sustainability level are over helming. The major challenges are traditional processing, scarcity of potable water, adverse climate, losses through insect infestation and low profit margins. On a personal level many of the women suffer from poor health, hygiene and nutrition along with a lack of education, child care, and transportation to carry those long distances to their jobs. This can only be done though education about nutrition, health, sanitation, child care and raring on current technologies and best practices techniques.

State Government wants to know the problems faced by the fisherwomen in Andhra Pradesh to take some policy decisions. Based on my earlier experience The University supported to find out the ongoing challenges.

In the fishing areas of the southern maritime state of Andhra Pradesh, women dominate the retail fresh fish trade for their livelihoods. The major recommendations to benefit the Fisher women are 1) better marketing facilities for fish venders, 2) appropriate training materials for fish marketing groups on post harvest technology aimed at improved handling fish quality and value, 3) the most important step to increase the purchasing power by introducing supplementary occupations, 4) technologies for processing low cost fish in to value added products which are in demand from different parts of the country and abroad, and 5) in aquaculture extension programs for fisher women should be one of the target groups.

Keywords: Fish Marketing;

Introduction

Fishing in our country plays a substantial role in contributing to the country's economy through export and through inland sales and at the same time supplying food to many and supporting thousands of families. Fisheries in India account for 2.5% of the gross domestic product and generate powerful income and employment opportunities for many of the country's rural poor.

Out of the total marine fish landings of about 2.2 million metric tones [1], nearly 65% are marketed as fresh fish for direct human consumption with women dominating the retail fresh fish trade in all most all the maritime states of India [2], providing a link between the producer and the consumer. As much as 20% of the catches are processed by traditional methods mainly by salting and drying, which is an important livelihood activity for a significant number of women, throughout the coastal India. The demand for traditional products is strong and hence offers an opportunity for income generation with relatively low investment for the poor in fishing communities. As much as 20% of the catches are processed

by traditional methods mainly by salting and drying, which is an important livelihood activity for a significant number of women, throughout the coastal India. The demand for traditional products is strong and hence offers an opportunity for income generation with relatively low investment for the poor in fishing communities.

Women, who constitute approximately half of India's population, play a vital role in the operation of the fisheries and their continuing growth as a component of the agricultural sector of the economy. The contributions of the fisher women penetrate every aspect of postharvest handling, preservation, processing and marketing of seafood products, and provide an integral link between producers and consumers. These fishermen in Andhra Pradesh live in 453 marine fishing villages in various coastal districts namely East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Krishna, West Godavari, Nellore, Prakasam, Guntur and Vizianagaram. India occupies a prominent position in fish producing and exporting countries in Asia. As a result fisher population is more along the coastline of the state.

Materials and Methodology

The present study attempts to generate information on the activities, constraints, priorities and need of fisherwomen, in selected coastal villages of Andhra Pradesh detailed surveys were conducted in selected coastal villages in the state to obtain information on average fish catch and disposal; fishing activities of women; income and expenditure on food of Fisher families, general meal pattern and the problems of the fisher women. Among the nine sea coast districts in Andhra Pradesh, Guntur District was selected. Guntur District had 4 sea coast Mandalas namely; Bapatla, Pittalavari, Nizampatanam, and Repalle. Families' having at least one pre-school child was enumerated. Out of enumerated families, 30 families from each Mandal were selected randomly.

Results

The Socio-economic structure of small scale fisheries in India is very complex and there are many factors which influence the participation of women in fishery related activities. Prawn peeling, fish curing, drying and marketing, net making, fishing in the canals and calm shell collection are the major areas of women's participation. A distinct line cannot be drawn among various groups engaged in different activities as these activities are quite often not mutually exclusive.

The various fishing activities performed by the fisher folk are discussed in the study.

Average fish catch per week of the 120 families and mode of disposal is given below.

None of them are involved in prawn and crab catch because lack of suitable boats and nets. All the families were catching only fish, reveal that 75% of the families get less than 5 kg of fish on an average per week. Only 8% of the families were getting above 10 Kg, of fish per week. A large number of families (75%) sell their fish in bulk while a small percent (25%) carry their fish catch to the market and sell it as whole sale.

Fishing activities of women

Fisher folk generally include both sexes and help each other to improve their economy and living. Women mostly look after marketing, sun drying and salting of fish. On the whole 31% of women were involved in fishing activity in these villages. A large number of women (62%) from these villages were involved in the agricultural work. Only 23% of women just stay at home and look after their household duties and children without doing any income generating work.

Income and Expenditure on Food of fisher families

General meal pattern consists of only carbohydrates without any protein and micronutrients very little dhal and vegetables are included in their diets of the selected families.

Curing drying and trading fish

In coastal fishing, once the catch is handed, women take over the entire post harvest operations namely sorting on the spot auctioning, gutting and salting(curing), drying, carrying the dried fish to market in the mainland and trading, the fish are sold at both retail and wholesale rates. Besides, selling the fish in the market, they carry baskets full of fish on their head to sell on door to door basis. Women also buy fresh fish from boat owners and traders usually on credit and the money is paid back after disposing the processed commodity. In fish curing and drying also centralized type of activity is seen. These yards engage women on weekly wages at the rate of Rs.10 to Rs.15 per day. Curing of fish is practiced on the sea shore by small trades with the help of women.

Net making

Net making is a leisure time activities. Agents for net making distribute nylon yarn among households. A women can braid a maximum of one kg net a week.

A women can earn Rs.20/- per week through net making. The net making by women is reported to be decreasing with the establishment of nylon net factories.

Women's participation in fishery related activities

The availability of infrastructure was found to be the major factor influencing women's role in fishery related activities. In certain parts of marine fishing villages, women have to spend a major part of their time in fetching drinking water from road side public hydrants.

Among the women who participated in peeling, a good percentage can be accounted for by those who go to the peeling shades to do the job. The income thus earned is mainly used for buying personal requirement like clothes and cosmetics. In the case of other activities, where women of higher age group participate, the earnings are added to the household income. Women are in general hopeful of improving their lives through the development of fisheries activities and show readiness to acquire new skills and undergo training for the same. But poverty and to a certain extent ignorance have hampered their progress.

Artisanal fisher women

Being illiterate and with no other opportunity to work, the fisher and with no other opportunity to work, the fisher women of artisanal units helped their men folk in fish marketing and related sundry activities. Nearly 90% of fisher women in this artisanal fisherman families processed skills in net making and fish processing. Mostly they attended to the repairs of nets. The artisanal fishing covered local varieties of fishes. The unsold as well as rejections were processed by the fisher women and sold in course of time.

Role of fisher women in decision making

The involvement of women in decision making is less in households of fishermen operating mechanized boats. But they play a major role in purchase of food, clothes, and jewels/vessels and in hut repairs and maintenance. In the artisanal craft operating families, fisher women were involved in decision making in economic activities to some degree. The areas include decision about purchase of gear/craft and disposal of catch etc. The decision on expenditure on food was made by women nearly 90% of the cases, women dominated in decision making on making on almost all the other household activities.

Figure

Problems

1. Study of the socio-economic conditions of the fisher women has long been neglected by sociologist and economists.
2. One of the main problems of which is of deep concern to the fisher women is better marketing facilities for fish venders.
3. Women will benefit greatly from having an "open" local authority like Municipal Corporations etc. that is expected to be responsive to public needs.
4. Successful cooperation's have to be developed to create some appropriate training materials for fish marketing groups. Such training will facilitate in puts on post harvest technology aimed at improved handling fish quality and value.
5. The fishermen are caught in a vicious circle of borrowing and paying back money which results in low savings and heavy debts. The most important step in the upliftment of the community is to increase the purchasing power by increasing the income from fisheries and introducing supplementary occupations.
6. Efforts should be intensified to educate the fisher women on small family norms.
7. Technologies have to be developed in which women can be associated for processing low cost fish in to value added products which are in popular demand from different parts of the country and abroad, like dry dish, fish pickles, fish cutlet, fish soup powder and fish flakes etc.,
8. In aquaculture extensions programs for farm women should be one of the target groups.
9. Cooperatives may be organized for women engaged in processing and trading of fish and training may be given in improved handling and processing techniques.
10. Properly trained and educated women should be deployed as link workers to effective implementation of thousands of technology through motivation and development of entire human ship and liaison with deferent agencies.

Discussions and Conclusion

Food intake was observed to be inadequate when compared with the Recommended Dietary Allowances. This may be due to low economic status, literacy, lack of nutritional awareness. High anemic state may be due to low consumption of iron rich foods, poor health, hygiene and sanitation. Also might be due to lack of nutritional awareness. Finally it is recommended that Nutrition Education to create awareness on food, nutrients and health is very much essential. Women friendly technologies to be adopted for better nutritional status and better economic status. Though the fisherwomen were not aware of hygiene, environmental sanitation, health education repeated awareness and training programs may contribute for better understanding.

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