

Research Papers



**A STUDY ON MARINE FISH MARKETING IN TAMILNADU**

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**Abstract**

*Fishes are one of the most important groups of vertebrates, which benefit human beings in more than one way. Fishes are more common and widely distributed in all parts of the world. The species may be different, the quality and quantity may vary but they are used by man everywhere. Fish is a general term used for all types of aquatic forms including prawns, shell fishes, lobsters and true fishes. Fish has been one of man's main source of animal protein.*

Long ago, man discovered fishes as a valuable source of food and devised simple weapons like the spear, nets and traps to catch them. The importance of fish in diet lies in the chemical composition of the flesh, which is rich in protein and minerals like calcium, phosphorus and iron. Some fishes, in addition, have varying quantities of fat and oil. Seafood is an excellent food because it is rich in nutrients. It has the best and notch protein which supplies essential amino acids. It is easily digestible as it has very little connective tissue. It gives many nutrients which the human beings need, without a worrisome amount of fats. The small amount of fats present in seafood is not surprising if any one says that the intake of seafood is the nutritional insurance, the problem of protein gap in food is much more acute in populous country like India with chronic food shortage and malnutrition and the diet of a large number of masses constitutes cereals which contains carbohydrates to a major extent and other inferior type of food. Fish is a good solution to the problem of food.

**Marine Fish Marketing in Tamilnadu :**

Though the fish marketing system in Tamilnadu has been slowly transforming itself

from a primitive to a modern stage with increased facilities in transportation, communication and to lesser extent storage and processing. It can be fully developed for catering to the needs of the all out effort for developing both capture and culture fisheries. On the one hand the perennial glut in the catch of some or other species and the consequent drastic fall in prices still continuing at many small landing centres. On the other hand there has been a continuous increase in fish prices during recent years mainly due to increase in demand as against more or less in stagnant annual production. A number of species which were not allowed to enter the market channel in earlier years have already entered into the commercial list. The continuous increase in fish price without any consideration in catch level indicates that there has been a definite increase in the demand for fish. In spite of all these, a bumper catch during a particular season never helps the fishermen to get higher income and a very low catch in against the interest of both consumers and producers. Such chronic problems inherent in our fish marketing system could be solved through the formulation of a marketing policy based on the proper understanding on the prevailing marketing structure and its various complicated facets. The

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studies in the fish marketing even at a micro level, essentially help formulation and adaptation of such a marketing policy.

The present study on fish marketing was carried out in the Nagappattinam region of Tamilnadu. The main objectives are

1. To carry out a comprehensive study of pricing of marine fish
2. To find out the relationship between prices at different levels of fish marketing channels and
3. To study various problems relating to fish marketing system.

#### Data Base and Location :

Nagappattinam is one of the important maritime districts of Tamilnadu. It was carved out in the erstwhile Thanjavur District on October 1891. The district is bounded by the Bay of Bengal in the east, Palk straight in the south, Thiruvarur and Thanjavur Districts in the west and the Cuddalore district in the North. The district spread over 2715.83 sq.km. The total number of marine fish villages in Nagappattinam district is 51, the total fishermen population of the region has been estimated to about 79768 (active fishermen 40796 : active fisher women 38972).

Nagappattinam landing Centre has been selected as the primary fish markets for the observation since it records maximum landings of marine fish in the Nagappattinam coast and its supply is mainly confined to the town and sub urban areas. Similarly among the wholesale fish markets of Nagappattinam, Akkaraipettai, Keechankuppam dominates in terms of quantity of arrivals in the number of retail purchases. Maximum quantity of fish from Keechankuppam landing centre is also channeled to this wholesale market which exports to various districts and states of Tamilnadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

Data on landing centre prices, wholesale and retail prices of different varieties of fish were collected by the following marketing channels, the information on cost of sorting, packing and transportation was also collected at different stages.

#### Price Behaviour:

The price behavior of fish is mainly characterized by wide fluctuation at all stages of transaction in the marketing chain, which results from the highly perishable nature of fish and the high variation in its short run supply. Price is determined by the interaction of demand and

supply at both producing centres, primary markets and consumer markets. At landing centres (primary markets) the market demand aggregate demand from wholesalers which is indicated by the number of trucks arrived at the centre and also from cycle vendors, retailers and individual purchasers. There will not be much variation in the day to day volume of transactions by these purchasers. In other words the short run demand is more or less stable. However the level of supply on any day is completely unpredictable and short run supply is highly inelastic. Hence on any day a bumper catch at a landing centre will slash down the fish and a small catch will boost the prices to very high level. For any commodity, price stability is a major factor which induces the producer to increase the level of production. Though the short term fluctuation in fish price is very wide, the average annual prices of all commercially important fishes is continuously increasing.

The functional relationship of wholesale to landing centre price and retail to whole price has been estimated for selected commercially important varieties like seer fish, pomfrets, sharks, barracudas, threadfin breams and white baits. The variations in landing centre price is wide only for a few varieties depending upon the size of its day to day catch. Even for these varieties the retail prices do not show much fluctuation. Because of the monopolistic situation at the wholesale level, the wholesale and retail prices are maintained at a higher level at even at the time of glut either by controlling the supply by making use of the processing facilities or by diverting it to retail markets. The marketing costs over the recent years showed an increase mainly because of the increased cost of packing materials, transportation and labour charges for packing, loading and unloading of the fish. So that the fish can be delivered to the consumers in a better condition.

#### Marketing Channels :

Regarding the fish marketing the following channels are usually followed

- (i) producer – retailer – consumer,
- (ii) producer retailer - wholesaler – consumer
- (iii) Producer- commission agent-wholesaler-retailer-consumer
- (iv) Producer- wholesaler – commission agent – retailer – consumer
- (v) Producer – commission agent – wholesaler-commission agent – retailer-consumer.

In the first channel, cycle vendors or head load

vendors purchase fish directly from the landing centre (producer) and sell to consumer either at a market place or at door step of houses and hotels. In all other channels wholesalers are also involved. In some cases commission agents are involved either at landing centers or consumer markets and sometimes at both centres. Usually commission agents are engaged by wholesalers to purchase as well as to dispose the consignments. These agents get some percentage of fish value ( usually 5 to 10% ) from the wholesaler. They usually do not take the ownership of the lots. However the commission agents make some investments to bridge the time gap between payments by retailers to wholesalers. In fish marketing the transaction is mostly done on credit basis . The retailers make the payments after one or two days and at certain places after a week. Depending upon the personal relationship between agent and retailer, those payments will be sometimes delayed. But the agents have to make payments to wholesaler within the allowed time period of time. In such circumstances the agent has to pay from his own pocket. For this type of investment the agent gets a margin from the retailer in addition to his commission from wholesaler which usually reflects upon the retail price.

#### **Role of Intermediaries:**

The intermediaries or middlemen play very important role in marketing. They incur different levels of marketing channels .The method of disposal of fish is by auction. As soon as the boat reaches the harbour the catch is handed over to the auctioneer and it is his responsibility to auction the fish and make payments to the boat owner. He gets a commission usually about 5% for his service. Some of auctioneers advance loans to boat owners to get the write of auctioning and if the loan is comparatively bigger amount , he gets a higher commission of about 10%. The packing is done in bamboo basket or plastic boxes by putting fish and ice almost in equal proportion in alternate layers. Then the packed baskets or boxes will be loaded in the truck or tempos to carry towards the distant markets. Auto vans are mostly used for transportation to near by markets and cycles for street vending or house to house selling.

#### **Problems of Fish Marketing System :**

##### **Lack of sufficient capital:**

Indian fishermen are very poor, and he is using old and outdated technology for marine and inland fishing. But due to the adoption of the New

Economic Policy (NEP) since 1991, the big capitalist and foreign companies are catching and exploiting tremendous fish from the ocean. They are using modern technologies.

#### **Proper Storage Facilities and Ice Factories :**

It is clear that fish is a highly perishable good. Sometimes fishermen catch enough quantity of fish. But due to lack of storage facilities and processing facilities they are compelled to sale immediately in the nearby market. The result is that the fisherman get very low price to their fish products. Similarly ice is an important commodity for preservation of fish. But there is lack of ice factories at coastal areas. Due to lack of fresh water there are limitations on the ice factories.

#### **Technical Knowledge:**

For the coastal and deep fishing , it is essential to use very advanced and modern techniques for catching the fish, but this industry is suffering from lack of technical knowledge. Now a days rich fishermen are using mechanized fishing trawlers and boats. But the proportion of this is very limited with the poor.

#### **Proper Transport Facilities :**

A basic and important factor in fishing industry is that the fish should get remunerative price and it is necessary to transport fish in to the internal parts of the country i.e., from coastal area to inland area. For transporting the fish, availability of cheap means of transport are limited. Sometimes the coastal transport is very high. The result is that the price of fish remains very low, which results in loss to the fishermen.

#### **Natural Calamities :**

Nature is playing a very big role in fishing industry. Sometimes sudden changes take place in the sea due to strong trade winds, monsoons and cyclones etc. This makes fishing difficult and risky especially in certain months i.e., from June to September in Western part of India.

#### **Social and Religious Prejudices:**

Due to prejudices and social and religious values there are number of people at the coastal and outside the coastal areas, who are not eating fish and fish products during certain months in a year. This tendency is affecting the marketing and pricing of the fish.

#### **Other problems :**

1 High temperature at the coastal area makes fish

preservation more difficult and costly.

2 As the coastlines at many places are broken and there is a paucity of good fishing harbour, the boats cannot be landed due to rocks of broken harbours.

3 The fish marketing there has been no regulation even in major market, which initially helps the middlemen. No proper guiding, weighing and quality control are maintained at any level of fish marketing. Most of the existing malpractices in fish marketing can be avoided by introducing regulated marketing system, in the lines of the agricultural produce.

#### CONCLUSION:

Over the recent years fish marketing in Tamilnadu has been transforming itself into a modern stage despite the infrastructure constraints and inherent complications in the marketing system. The role of middlemen in fish marketing system is continuing unabated due to the absence of institutional involvement. Nevertheless it has been observed that the share of middlemen in consumer's rupee has been coming down. The involvement of several middlemen in the marketing chain is detrimental to the interest of both the producers and the consumers. The variation in landing center price is wide only for a few variations depending upon the size of its day to day catch. Even for these varieties the retail prices do not show much fluctuation. Because of the monopolistic situation at the wholesale level, maintained at a higher level even at the time of glut either by controlling and supply of making use of the processing facilities or by diverting it to different retail markets. It has been found that whatever be the processing facilities including drying and curing available in this area only the middlemen take advantage out of it and its benefit is not transferred.

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