Casting the net wider: integrative approaches to value chain research in fisheries

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Outline

- Why dried fish?
- DFM Objectives
- Conceptual framework for understanding value chains
- Structure, Conduct, Performance & governance
- DFM's 'stacked value chain' + social economy approach
- Methods
- Doing scoping research
- Scoping reports
- Interview guides

Why Dried Fish?

- Extremely important, but largely ‘invisible’ (where acknowledged focus is technical)
- Especially important for the poor (consumers, workers), and women
- Major challenges (e.g. working conditions, food safety)
- Studying dried fish value chains can illuminate a wide range of understudied issues in fisheries

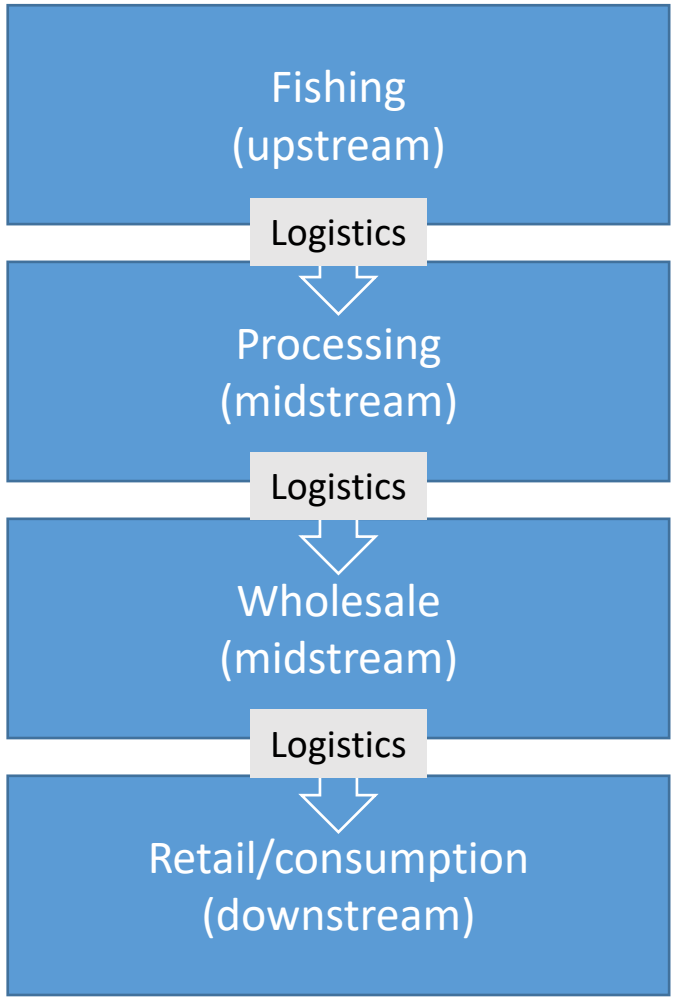
  (e.g. gender, labour, nutrition, wellbeing)
- Understanding social and economic context necessary for effective interventions to address challenges

DFM Objectives

- **Produce a comprehensive study of the Indian Ocean dried fish economy**, with attention to historical, social, cultural, economic, and policy variability
- **Conduct fine-grained studies of the structure, operation, and dynamics of dried fish value chains** in selected sites across South and Southeast Asia
- **Assess the contribution of dried fish to food and nutrition security**
- **Identify and promote priority policy recommendations and development interventions** to enhance the food and nutrition security, food safety, and sustainable and socially just livelihoods

Value chain segments

- Value chains are **networks** of actors whose activities enable the production and distribution of goods or services to consumers.
- Value chains can be conceived of as being made up of three **segments** – the upstream, the midstream, and the downstream.



Functions

- All value chain actors transform **inputs** into **outputs** (goods or services) using **assets** and labor. These become inputs when used by other actors further ‘downstream’ in the value chain.
- For example, fishers use boats and nets (assets) fuel, ice and credit (inputs) and labor, to ‘make’ raw fish (output). Fishers sell raw fish to fish processors, who use it as an input for their operations.
- Behavior of actors in each segment of the chain can be summarized as: **Assets**, **Buy**, **Make**, **Sell**

Value chain segments and functions

Segment	Actor	Assets	Inputs (Buy)	Making	Outputs (Sell)	Notes
Upstream	Fishers	Boats, Nets, Engines	Ice, Fuel, **Credit, Labor**	Catching fish	Fresh fish	May employ family or hired labor, may use credit from traders
Midstream	Processors	Land for drying/ fermenting/ smoking etc. Drying racks, pots for fermenting etc.	Fresh fish Salt, Pesticide, Fuel, **Credit**, **Labor**	Sorting, Gutting, Salting, Drying, Fermenting, Packing etc	Dried fish	Processors and fishers may be separate, or may combine functions, may use family or hired labor, may use trader credit, and/or provide credit to fishers
Midstream	Traders	Capital, Warehouses, Shops, Vehicles	Dried fish from processors or other traders, **Credit, Labor**	Aggregating Repacking, Grading, Distribution	Dried fish	Many different types of trader – e.g. 'collectors'; 'wholesalers'; 'brokers', consumers and providers of credit
Downstream	Retailers	Shops, Vehicles	Dried fish from traders, **Credit, Labor**	Sourcing, Distribution	Dried fish	Many types, from 'traditional' retailers in wet markets and mobile 'hawkers' to 'modern' retail – e.g. supermarkets, online

Framework for VC analysis

- **‘Structure’** - distribution of actors in each segment of the value chain in terms of:
  - Geographical location; Number; Size, Social identity; Degree of concentration (or dispersion) in ownership of assets and market share.

- **‘Conduct’** - behavior of value chain actors as they acquire inputs, ‘make’ something with them, and sell the outputs

- **‘Performance’** refers to how well a whole value chain, or a value chain segment, or a set of value chain actors, performs – e.g. in terms of:
  - Inclusiveness; Labor conditions; Food safety; Ecological sustainability; Wellbeing

Social dimensions

- Close especially close attention to: **“who”** (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age, place of origin, religion, caste, worker/owner, family/hired labor)

  Who has what? - e.g. boats, land, capital, education, status

  Who does what? - e.g. work (paid/unpaid), business operation

  Who gets what? - e.g. wages, payment in kind, profit, interest

  What do they do with it? – e.g. use for day to day survival, for expanding business, to buy assets

- Change over time (**now; 5 years ago; 10 years ago**)

Crosscutting themes/concerns

- **Social wellbeing** – how social relations, (dis)satisfactions, and economic and nutritional benefits affect the wellbeing of actors in dried fish VCs and consumers (**relational, subjective, material** dimensions)
- **Gender** (and other markers of identity)
- **Labor** – working conditions and labor arrangements throughout chain
- **Credit** – nature of credit relations throughout chain
- **Governance** – formal and informal institutions (and their interactions) that shape the dried fish economy: e.g. credit relations, dispute resolution
- **Food quality** (safety and nutrition)

Rationale

- Dried fish VCs important for the wellbeing of large number of peoples, but this importance is not recognized, also many challenges
- Existing information often very limited, partial, old, inaccurate
- Most conventional VC studies are based on KII, not extensive interviews with large numbers of actors throughout VC – “conventional wisdom” is often incorrect (e.g. Myanmar maize, aquaculture)
- Stacked VC surveys are representative and can provide credible information
- “Stacked”: Surveys of each segment are stacked on top of each other; Scale of analysis of stacked (individual behavior > segment > whole chain > S & SE Asia; phases of research are stacked (scoping, then surveys & ethnography)
- Social economy approach – incorporates concerns with wellbeing, power, labor, identify etc. that are usually missing from VC analysis

Methods

Phase 1:

- Scoping research

Phase 2:

- Ethnography & participant observation
- Structured stacked value chain surveys
- Laboratory analysis of dried fish

Scoping research

Provides:

1) Strong qualitative understanding of dried fish VCs (report)

2) Information that allows for choices to be made about what to include (or exclude) in the ethnography & stacked survey

3) Information that will inform the choice of research questions in each country/site (for ethnography & stacked VC survey)

4) Data that is the basis for drawing a representative sample of actors from each segment of the value chain

5) Designing a survey questionnaire that respondents understand, and that will generate accurate responses

Scoping research methods

- Literature review
  - (including relevant datasets, unpublished statistics)
- Semi-structured interviews
- FGD
- Observation & visual documentation
- Satellite images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Google Earth

Where to start?

- Visit markets – which products are available?
- Visit wholesalers – where do their products come from, where do they sell to?
- Existing studies (use as guide, but don’t assume they are correct)
- Own networks
- Satellite images (e.g. location of fishing villages)
- Relevant government departments & institutions, producer/trader associations

- Keep an open mind
- Think critically
- Triangulate

Scoping report outline

- Each team will produce a report at the end of the scoping phase of research. This should include the following:
- **Executive summary** (2-3 pages – one finding per paragraph, most important findings only. Can be same as conclusion)
- **Introduction** - Short summary of purpose of the research, structure of the report
- **Methods**, including:
  - Map/s that identify all major fieldwork sites
  - Explaining the scoping approach adopted
  - Summarizing number interviews by value chain segment, actor type and gender

Results

Literature review:

Brief review of secondary sources, pay particular attention to historical sources, media

Identify common themes in literature and treat these as hypotheses (e.g. credit, pesticides)

Review existing datasets and sources of unpublished data (especially data on dried fish consumption, production/trade) - e.g. household consumption surveys, records of prices, trade volumes (can be unpublished, only use if considered reliable)

Results:

- Presented by segment (fishing, processing, wholesale and retail)
- If some value chains have very different characteristics it may be appropriate to have a separate section of the report on each chain.

  (e.g. fermented fish, dried marine fish, dried freshwater fish)

Results (for each value chain segment)

1) The **structure of the segment** (the main **geographical locations** where the segment exists; estimates of the **number of the main types of actor** in each location; **size of actors**)

2) Details of the **main products** produced or traded in each location studied (including estimated volumes)

3) The **main types of actor** in the segment (including estimated numbers), and their social, cultural and economic characteristics (scale, religion, ethnicity, wealth, political power, etc.)

5) Details of the **main activities conducted** by the main types of actor in each segment (Buy, Make and Sell, and type of work performed)

Crosscutting sections

- **Gender** roles and relations, other identities
- **Labor** arrangements, working conditions and migration
- **Credit** relations
- **Food safety**
- **Governance** (formal and informal)
- **Wellbeing** of actors in the chain (observed and expressed)
- **International trade** in dried fish products
- Implications for **fisheries sustainability**/ecology

Final sections

Conclusion - summarizing key findings, policy implications, missing information and implications for future research

- Illustrative **photographs** of activities and issues in each value chain segment (throughout text)

Annexes

- List of local, English and scientific names of all dried fish species encountered during research (with photographs)
- Local names and English descriptions of all products (with photographs).

Interview guides

- There to ensure we have a shared understanding of the types of questions we need to cover
- We want to be able to answer all the questions based by combining answers from all interviews – not expecting to cover all questions in a single interview in most cases
- Check list to refer to, structure to help you remember what needs to be covered.
- Add own questions – probe if you don't understand a response, ask about the things you observe around you
- Keep asking the questions to new informants until 'saturation' – no new information
- NOT a questionnaire – don't have to cover all questions in a set order
- NOT fixed – can be constantly adapted to each situation (drop questions/sections that aren't relevant when saturation reached, add new questions as you learn new things that weren't anticipated)