

The impact of household income on dried fish consumption in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Dried fish plays an important role in human nutrition in Sri Lanka by supplying more than 60% of the total animal protein intake for the populace. Despite of the high consumption of fish and chicken, dried fish remains at the third place against the increasing prices. Dried fish prices have increased drastically from 2012 in compared to fish and chicken prices where the later remains relatively constant during the period. The consumption and expenditure patterns of chicken, fish and dried fish (the main animal protein sources except egg and dairy) differ in relation to the mean income of respective expenditure deciles; a categorization of socioeconomic status by dividing the population into 10 income groups from the lowest income (1) to the highest income group (10) based on the expenditure pattern. This study explores the relationship between the level of dried fish consumption and expenditure over mean income of each expenditure deciles. A quantitative approach was followed drawing secondary data from Department of Census & Statistics and Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Development and Hector Kobbakaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute (HARTI). Monthly average household consumption quantity (g) and expenditure (Rs.) of commonly used dried fish varieties [skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) and dried sprat (*Stolephorus sp.*)], fresh marine fish varieties [skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*)], and chicken were considered for the analysis during 2006-2016. Pearson correlation coefficient and income elasticity analyses were adopted using SPSS 21. Higher percentage share (36% <) of dried fish expenditure is captured by 1-4 income range of expenditure deciles that counts on 1-3 for consumption (43% <). In contrast, chicken is highly consumed (39% <) at higher income households (4-10). Results reveals that the analyzed dried fish varieties, which are highly consumed in Sri Lanka bears lower income elasticity of demand, which is (Sprats-0.55 and Skipjack tuna-0.56) less than 01 while chicken shows 1.06. A strong positive correlation between percentage share of chicken consumption (0.777)/ expenditure (0.802) while negative correlation with percentage share of dried sprats (-0.743)/ dried skipjack tuna (-0.798) consumption are observed against mean income in each expenditure deciles. In conclusion, the dried fish act as the main animal protein source for lower income while chicken serves for the higher income households. Income elasticity of demand indicates all observed varieties as normal goods except chicken, which are luxury goods. Therefore, decisions and policies on pricing and marketing of dried fish need to be addressed in favor of the lower income population in the country whose nutritional security highly depends on dried fish consumption, as an animal protein and micro nutrient sources.

Keywords: Consumption, Dried fish, Expenditure deciles, Income elasticity of demand

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