

The multiple dimensions of contemporary cultural fishing

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Abstract

Cultural fishing is an emerging term being used in fisheries regulations. While people fish for a variety of reasons, managers seek to categorize different types of fishing for quotas, constituents, and effective governance. Attempts to use cultural fishing as a management category is difficult because it is relatively new, and the term has not been well defined in theoretical terms, academic scholarship, or used consistently in practice. Recently, defining cultural fishing has become important in American Samoa, where a lawsuit successfully challenged a rule to allow longline vessels to fish closer to the island archipelago in waters that had previously been reserved for smaller vessels. Using American Samoa as a relevant and timely context we explore the different factors to be considered when defining cultural fishing. We developed a framework that can be used to evaluate the tradeoffs across multiple dimensions of cultural fishing. This framework can be used by managers, scientists, and regulators to frame a dialogue about cultural fishing in American Samoa and elsewhere and as a powerful tool to analyze fisheries governance arrangements.

Socio-economic issues of women dried fish processors in southern Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Dried fish processing is a post-harvest technique attached to small-scale fisheries yet important income generating activity in fishing communities. It reduces post-harvest losses while adding value to excess and low quality fish. Although, it is an economic venture mostly at household level extending upto international sphere, less research and discussions are held to explore the socio-economic issues. Focusing this lacuna in the dried fish processing industry at cottage level this paper examines the socio-economic issues encountered by women processors in Southern Sri Lanka. A mixed method approach was adapted with a questionnaire survey (n=120) and in-depth interviews as quantitative and qualitative data collection respectively. By being the only source of income generation, majority of women (64 percent) are fulltime processors employing inherent knowledge and life long experience from childhood. Despite, the average monthly income is 300 USD, the processing is subjected to seasonality. Less fish availability and high prices curb dried fish processing during the off-season. Moreover, high labour cost, uncertain weather (climate),

less fish for processing, and poor storage facilities were highlighted as main hindrance. Higher labour cost prompted to utilize family labour extensively thus motivated to absorb idling family labour (76%) into the production. However, women in dried fish processing are socially less recognized with numerous restrictions over accessibility including fish resources (input), beach (place), market (dominancy), and finance (decision making). This evokes for an egalitarian resource allocation that lessen socio-economic vulnerability and social exclusion of dried fish processors especially from a gendered perspective.

Keywords: Dried fish, women, Southern Sri Lanka, socio-economic, social recognition

Introduction

Fish and fisheries products are cheaper sources of animal protein, which is also the solution for problems of malnutrition in most of the regions (FAO, 2016). Being a highly perishable commodity, fish and fisheries products are susceptible for deterioration. Thus, dried fish processing is one of the famous fish preserving technique used worldwide to extend the shelf life of fish and fisheries products (Latif et al., 2014). Dried fish is the main protein source for inland communities in Sri Lanka evidently for 79.2 percent in estate regions (Census and statistics, 2014) where distribution in fresh form is always challenging. In this respect, dried fish production is a vital industry in most of the countries including Sri Lanka (NARA 2015). However, the domestic dried fish production in Sri Lanka cannot cater the demand of the nation. Hence, the consumption is largely depending on imports. The figure 01 shows the dried fish imports and production in Sri Lanka from 2007 to 2015.

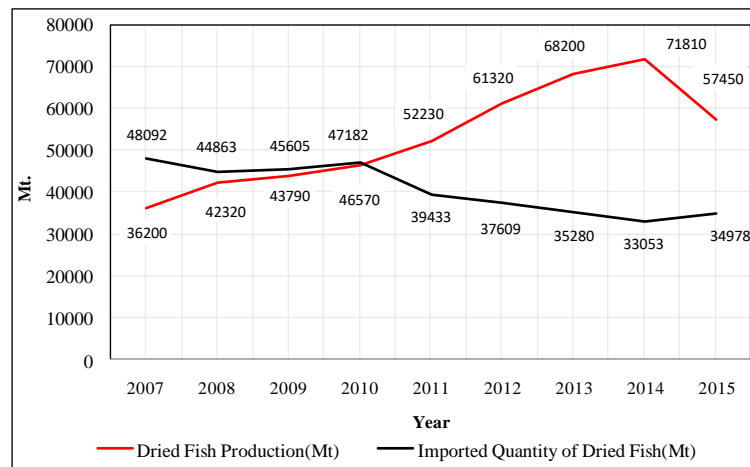


Figure 1: Dried fish production and importation in Sri

(Source: MFARD, 2016)

According to figure 01, dried fish production is remarkably increasing from 2010 to 2014 at a rate of 4925.6 mt per year. Imports follow the opposite pattern during the same period with a slight decreasing trend. However, from 2014 to 2015 the import quantities have been increased to compensate the decreasing production, which is in line with the marine fresh fish production

(MFARD, 2016). Sri Lanka imports dried fish and sprats mainly from Thailand, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Maldives, and China (NARA, 2015).

Marine dried fish processing is one of the main occupations in certain fishing communities in Sri Lanka (Central Bank, 2016), especially in Northern and Eastern Provinces where 70 percent of the products coming from (NARA, 2015). Further, women engagement is significant in dried fish processing (Thivviyan and Jayakody, 2017) yet not documented in detail. Although, the small-scale fisheries is attracted by researchers, scientists, academics, and policy makers dried fish production has not well acknowledged even in policy documents. In fact, dried fish industry needs to follow the same different lenses as used in small-scale fisheries to view matters in a realistic manner. In fact, this study aims to unravel the socio-economic status of dried fish processing women in Southern Province in Sri Lanka. Following sections of the paper describes the methodology adopted, results and discussions. Finally, the paper presents the key findings in the conclusion.

Methodology

The study was confined to Southern Province of Sri Lanka due to budgetary constraints. Matara district, which is one of the major fishing Districts in Sri Lanka (out of total 15 marine fishing Districts) was selected. The survey was conducted in two fisheries inspector (FI) divisions; Kudawella and Nilwella, which reports the highest quantities of fish harvest from small-scale fisheries from one day OFRP (Out board fiber reinforcement plastic) boats. Moreover, these two FI divisions contribute significantly for dried fish production in South. Secondary data for the study were gathered from department of Census and Statistics, Ministry of Fisheries, Central Bank reports, scholarly articles and other published and unpublished documents. A mixed method approach was employed to collect primary data. In-depth interviews with 10 women dried fish processors, key informant discussions, and participant observations were used to gather qualitative data. A structured questionnaire survey was administered to glean quantitative data from 120 women dried fish processors. Absence of a list of dried fish processes in the area was compensated by adopting snowball-sampling method. The survey was conducted for two months from October to November in 2017. Collected data were tabulated and analysed in Ms Excel. Descriptive statistics and presentations methods were used to communicate the findings meaningfully.

Results and Discussion

Majority of women in the sample are full time workers accounts for 64 percent and only 32 percent are working for part time. The part time processors engage with fish selling, dried fish selling, and/or operating small boutique as their main livelihood. In fact, their engagement in dried fish processing is not regular. The education level of the sample limits upto grade five (28 percent) or grade eight (32 percent). This reveals lower level of education among women dried fish processors yet 12 percent have been obtained secondary education upto Advanced level examination. Having lesser opportunities for well reputed and recognized jobs in the society due to inadequate education qualifications, dried fish processing has become an attractive income generation for majority. Moreover, descending from small-scale fishing families with income fluctuations, the income from dried fish has become a vital supplement for the household economy. The community comparatively categorizes the scale of operation into three; large scale; medium scale; and small-scale, based on the strength of the labour force. Fifty-eight percent operates dried fish processing as a medium scale venture and 26 percent as small-scale. Remarkably, 16 percent are operating at

a larger scale with paid labour and well-established marketing channels. Large-scale processors are equipped with regular fish suppliers and buyers. Family labour is the main source of labour for small-scale operations whereas relatives and neighbours are employed in medium-scale operations. Small-scale operators use left-over fish after selling, which are mostly supplied by their husbands or relatives. Medium scale operators buy fish from fish sellers from the fish market or directly from boats. Yet, the industry can be categorized as a cottage level industry because 48 percent are relying on family labour and 28 percent on relatives and neighbours. Only 24 percent get the support from hired labour especially for whom operating at large-scale. Women are satisfied with the support they are getting from family members for dried fish production (mean value 1.54). Almost all the respondents could not provide an exact answer with respect to earnings because; dried fish (fresh fish as well) production is seasonal; fish availability is uncertain and fluctuates; prices are species specific; entirely depending on the weather; spoilages/theft; and fluctuating market prices. The average monthly income from dried fish processing is shown in figure 02.

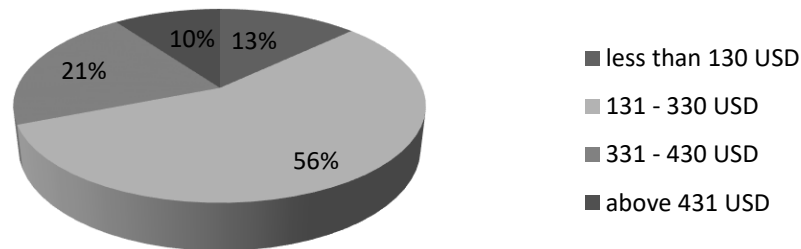


Figure 2: Average monthly income of dried fish production

According to figure 02, majority are earning 131 – 330 USD per month. This falls under poor income category, thus appear as a supplementary income source that strengthens the household economy. However, the income may vary with the species, quality, and the buyer. Selling is not a problem for all hence unattainable demand is affirmed. Retailers, wholesalers, direct buyers, and door to door collectors make the selling process easy for 74 percent of processors. Despite, 62 percent reported lack of free time for other household engagement due to dried fish processing, which is highly time consuming 80 percent are eager to continue with dried fish processing. Although, 20 percent are not sure about the future and indifference on continuation due to external factors/personal factors none of the respondent is willing to discontinue the dried fish production. This is evidence for happiness of women whom are empowered with economical gain while assuring food security at household. However, women in dried fish processing are socially less recognized. Hanging around the beach is not socially accepted for women. This limits negotiations for cheaper raw material (fresh fish) and getting higher market prices. Moreover, the process is dominated by men over buying dried fish and selling fresh fish through cultural taboos. Seasonality of fish availability, extended rainy season, competition with imported dried fish, cost of raw material, higher labor cost, lack of financial support, lack of enough space for drying (trellises) and storing, and waste disposal are the problems encountered by women dried fish producers in Matara District. Among these, fresh fish prices (82%), seasonality of fishing (70%), and higher labour cost (65%) are crucial.

Conclusion

The study was designed to find out the socio-economic status of women dried fish processors in Matara District in Sri Lanka especially concerning Kudawella and Nilwella Fisheries Inspector Divisions. As a way of utilizing idling labour and source of supplementary income, women are engaging in dried fish processing as full time and part time occupants. Having lower level of education, dried fish processing has become an alternate income generating activity for women. Dried fish processing takes place as medium or small-scale operations with the support of family members, relatives, and neighbours. Descending from a fishing community dried fish processing is not a matter of humiliation. However, women in dried fish processing are socially less recognized with numerous restrictions over accessibility including fish resources (input), beach (place), market (male dominancy), and finance (decision making). This evokes for an egalitarian resource allocation that lessen socio-economic vulnerability and social exclusion of dried fish processors especially from a gendered perspective.

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Migration in fishing communities: Gender and non-farm work in fishing communities in Cambodia

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Abstract

Fish resources both for inland fisheries and marine fisheries have been decreasing since around 2011. In Cambodia, both women and men go for fishing or at least involved quite heavily in selling