Potential of Thampalakamam bay to develop the edible bivalve industry in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Nowadays demand for edible bivalves had increased in Sri Lanka, especially in hotel industries. Hence a study was conducted to analyse the potential of Thampalakamam bay of Sri Lanka for the development of edible bivalve industry. Pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect the information. The study shows that a majority of the bivalve fishers engaged in clam fishery for their livelihood. In addition, fishers engaged in seasonal oysters, cockles and mussel fisheries. Monthly income from clam fishery was higher ($P<0.05$) than that of from mussel and oyster fishery due to low productivity in certain seasons and fluctuation in unit price of clam, mussel, cockle and oyster. However, introducing sound extension services on harvesting and post-harvesting technologies could improve the production potential of edible bivalves in Thampalakamam bay.

Keywords: clam, cockle, oyster, mussel, Thampalakamam bay

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Introduction

Naturally available edible bivalves are collected from Thampalakamam bay by coastal fishers of Kinniya for food and sale. The fishers practice bivalve fishery using traditional methods due to lack of improved technology on harvesting and marketing facilities (Nafees*et al.*, 2009). The demand for bivalves has grown in the local and international markets. The world's scallop production in 1990 was around 0.5 million tons which increasedtoaround 0.8 million tonsin 2012(FAO, 2012). It shows that there is a blooming future for the edible bivalve industry. In this context, information on potential bivalve producing sites, relevant human resources and their traditional harvesting practices are essential for the development of edible bivalve fishery in Sri Lanka. Though the edible bivalve fishery is observed inThampalakamam bay, detailed information on the above aspects is lack to develop the industry. Hence, a study was conducted to analyse the potential of edible bivalve fishery in Thampalakamam bay of Sri Lanka.

Constraints in bivalve fishery:

Heavy rain and wind totally affect the bivalve fishery in the study area. In addition, low price for the product and lack of fishing gear *viz.* craft, extension services and credit facilities constrained the fishers in sustaining their livelihood in bivalve fisheries.

Discussion

Though the youngsters in the study area did not want to do bivalve fishery. Married males actively involved in bivalve fishery to supplement their fisheries-based family income. Clams are harvested by majority of bivalve fishers. However, mussel, cockle and oysters are harvested seasonally. Production is peak during March to September except rainy and windy seasons. Due to seasonality in production pattern of bivalve species, non-uniformity in unit price for shucked bivalves and deviations in fishing trips caused deviation in monthly income of bivalve fishers. Sound extension programmes on bivalve fishing technologies, marketing and post-harvesting technologies could increase the bivalve production while improving the livelihood of the bivalve fishers.

Conclusion

Thampalakamam bay is potential area for edible bivalve fishery in Sri Lanka. Though clam fishery is dominated in the bay, significant amount of oyster, mussel and cockle fisheries also carried out by the fishers. In addition to calm fishery, other edible bivalve fisheries could be improved by introducing sound extension services on harvesting and post-harvesting technologies.

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