

Knowledge and attitude of stakeholders in the market chain on fish

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Abstract

Fisheries sector in Sri Lanka plays a significant role in the national economy. Marine fisheries contribute to about 90% of the total fish production. The actual fish production in 2004 was 253,190MT. It is said that around 30-40% of the total fish catch is wasted. The main reason is the improper post harvest practices, which could in turn be related to knowledge and attitudes of those in the fish chain towards fish. The fish chain in Sri Lanka like in other developing countries consists of fishermen including crew members of boats, collectors, transporters that may own boats and vendors at the wholesale as well as the retail level. A study was carried out to ascertain the knowledge, attitude and behavior of stakeholders stated above on fish. The area selected was the Matara district.

The methodology adopted was to interview respondents individually with a pre-prepared schedule, and the questions posed ranged from querying on their educational level, knowledge on nutritional status of fish, methods of spoilage, what each category of stakeholders thinks about the fish that deal with and whether they have any training exposures on relevant scientific aspects of fish.

The results showed that 71% of the respondents were illiterate and only 2% have had knowledge in biological and technical aspects about fishery and fish handling. Only 10% of the respondents knew proper methods of icing. On the whole, the study showed that the level of knowledge of the stakeholders on aspects of fish related to improving fish quality and delivering quality fish to the community was very low. Therefore, there is an immediate need to change the rooted attitudes of those in the fish market chain on fish, if the country is to avoid fish waste, and channel the fisheries sector to play a better role in contributing to the countries economy and to enhance the nutritional status of the population. This can be achieved by developing technology transfer programmes and delivering them together with the means to apply these practices by the stakeholders of the fish chain.

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