

Social Relationships of Dried Fish Producers in Trincomalee District, Sri Lanka

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Being a traditional source of animal protein in local diet, dried fish accounts for 4% in Sri Lankan average monthly household expenditure. Although, 70% of local dried fish products come from North & East Provinces, a production oriented dried fish studies are lacking. This study aims to investigate producer based intra & inter relationships & social & cultural influences on dried fish production. A mixed method approach was adapted to glean data from Kinniya & Muthur in Trincomalee District in Eastern Sri Lanka. A questionnaire survey (n=60) & in-depth interviews (n=10) were conducted to gather quantitative & qualitative data respectively. The snowball sampling method was employed. Gathered data were analyzed descriptively. Findings unravel multiple intra & inter relationships of dried fish producers particularly on knowledge sharing, fresh fish supply, supporters & buyers. Awareness on dried fish processing descends from parents (53%). Fresh fish sources are; boat owners (35%), fishermen (31%) & fish traders (25%). Intra relationships are prominent among supporters such as family & siblings (44%), friends (21%) & relatives (16%). Almost all producers (100%) sell through wholesaler demonstrating an external relationship with outsiders. Albeit, there are multi-faceted intra & inter relationships, an institutional arrangement is lacking. Muslims culture in both sites allows only men to engage in dried fish processing minimizing women involvement. Social & cultural analysis indicated that intra & inter relationships are converged toward family, siblings & relatives representing inner most tier of the community. Religion & cultural taboos further restrict expansion of the industry. Establishment of dried fish producers, association would be worthwhile by giving equal opportunities for both men & women producers that broaden their social networks & relationships to expand production

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