



Fish Marketing in Tripura: Structure and Constraints

Manidip Roy

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Ramkrishna Mahavidyalaya, Kailashahar

Alok Sen

Professor, Department of Economics, Assam University, Silchar - 788 011, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

The study aims at highlighting on the structure and constraints of fish marketing in Tripura based on both secondary information from literature review and primary information gathered through observation and stakeholder consultation. Roles played by different market intermediaries are discussed in the present paper. The study also identified different marketing channels followed by the produce after the harvest at pond site to the ultimate consumer involving a number of intermediaries in between. Important marketing functions performed by different marketing agencies in the state have been discussed in this paper. Finally, different constraints of fish marketing in select fish markets in the state are identified and remedial measures have been prescribed

KEYWORDS

Fish marketing, infrastructure, intermediaries, Tripura

Introduction

Marketing plays a very important role in economic development as it stimulates production, controls fluctuations in price levels and reduces cost of production. A well organised marketing system is most important for the growth of any economic enterprise. Fish being perishable, the problem is more acute. There is practically no definite structure of fish markets in the country (Pandey, et al., 1984). Fish markets and the marketing system throughout the country suffer from several problems and constraints. Tripura is also not an exception. In the present paper discussion is made on the structure and constraints of fish marketing in Tripura. The discussion will be based on both secondary information from literature review and primary information gathered through observation and stakeholder consultation.

Theoretical framework

Fish market is generally characterised by the conditions of monopsony and oligopsony and hence fish farmers do not get the advantage of high price prevalent in the markets. Basic economic theory indicates that in the perfectly competitive market no actor of production earns more than its opportunity cost and supernormal profit cannot exist in the long run as it is eliminated through competition. On the other hand, under imperfect competition, which includes monopsony, oligopsony and monopsonistic competition, supernormal profit is expected to be positive in the long-run equilibrium and it cannot be explained wholly in terms of the opportunity cost of the services provided by the middlemen (Sathiadhas, et al., 1994).

The real life market being imperfect in nature earns supernormal profit which is shared between producers and the intermediaries. The magnitude of profit and the ratio of profit sharing depend on the market infrastructure and the number of intermediaries in the market. Development of market infrastructure and reduction in market intermediaries may have influence on production through enhancement of producers' share to consumers' price.

Market intermediaries

Fish passes through several intermediaries from the landing centre or fish pond to the consumer. The intermediaries are involved in providing services of head loading, processing, preservation, packing and transporting and these activities

result in cost addition at every stage of marketing (Bishnoi, 2005). A big problem in documenting intermediaries in fish marketing is their multifunctional nature. There is no definite boundary between the functions of the intermediaries and in reality they perform several functions while marketing fish (Ganesh Kumar, et al., 2008).

The key intermediaries in fish marketing in Tripura are fish farmers / producers, hawkers, local traders, commission agents-cum-wholesalers and retailers (Singh, 2004).

Fish farmers / Producers: Fish farmers after harvesting fish sell those to the local traders at the pond site or to retailers through commission agents in the major fish markets or directly to retailers present in local fish markets or hawkers.

Hawkers: Hawkens are the local fishers who collect fish at the pond site and dispose of the produce by door-to-door selling.

Local traders: Local traders are the middlemen who catch fish on contract basis or purchase harvested fish at pond site and dispose those directly to retailers or through commission agents. Local traders usually have backward contract or verbal understanding with the farmers and forward contracts or understanding with commission agents and/or retailers.

Commission agents: The commission agent (locally called *Aratdar*) is an important functionary in the fish marketing channel in Tripura. Commission agents receive fish from fishermen / producer in the wholesale market and dispose the fish through auction on behalf of the fishermen / producer. For carrying out the function, commission agents are entitled to certain commission which normally varies from 6 to 8 percent of the sale value. On completion of auction, the commission agents pay the dues to the fishermen / producer instantly from their pocket on behalf of the retailer who usually refunds the amount after selling the products in the retail market.

Retailers: Retailers are the largest segment of marketing functionaries. They procure fish from fishermen / producer and local traders directly or through auction by commission agents.

Marketing channels

Marketing channels needs to be studied to understand the

marketing system and the relation of markets and market agencies to one another. Marketing channel is the route followed by the produce after the harvest at pond site to the ultimate consumer involving a number of intermediaries in between. The farmers use different marketing channels depending on the quantity of product they have for sale. Six such channels have been identified in the fish markets of Tripura which are as follows:

Channel 1: Producer – Local trader – Commission agent – Retailer – Consumer

Channel 2: Producer – Local trader – Retailer – Consumer

Channel 3: Producer – Commission agent – Retailer – Consumer

Channel 4: Producer – Retailer – Consumer

Channel 5: Producer – Hawker – Consumer

Channel 6: Producer – Consumer

Marketing functions

The important marketing functions performed by different marketing agencies in Tripura, apart from buying and selling of fish are assembling, transportation, grading, storage and weighing.

Assembling: Assembling is the function basically performed by local traders. They collect fish in small quantities from different sources and assemble them before transporting to the commission agents in the wholesale market or retailers in the retail market.

Transportation: Transportation of fish from pond to market is one of the important activities in fish marketing. Besides head load (*bhar*), other types of carriages that are commonly used for fish transport in Tripura are Bicycle, Rickshaw, Auto-rickshaw, Small truck etc depending on the distance to be travelled.

Grading: Grading of fish is not common at farmers' level. Grading is generally done by local traders or by the commission agents in the wholesale market and by retailers in the retail market before selling to the consumer.

Storage: Fish markets in Tripura in general are hardly having any permanent and scientific storage facility. Storage facility in the ice box is provided by the commission agents.

Weighing: In the wholesale market weighing of fish at a large scale is done by specialised staff of the commission agents. In retail market retailers themselves, do the weighing job while selling the fish to the consumer.

Marketing constraints

Different studies have identified different constraints of fish marketing in Tripura which are synthesised hereunder, though number of such study in the state is very limited.

Upadhyay (2008) studying two wholesale fish markets in the state viz., Battala in West Tripura District and Udaipur in South Tripura District and two retail markets viz., Lake Chowmuhani and Lembucerra fish markets, observed that the fish markets were poorly endowed with basic infrastructure and services. The markets under study were lacking parking space, availability of drinking water and shelter for the fish farmers which are considered to be essential basic infrastructure of any fish market. Further, the markets were found non-competitive because of the presence of few commission agents who, with their strong association, deals with all the transaction of the market exploiting the fish farmers.

Major marketing constraints faced by the fishers as identified by Das et al.(2013) in their study on two fish markets in the state (Battala wholesale fish market and Lake Chowmuhani retail fish market, the former being the largest wholesale market and the latter being the largest retail market in the state in terms of volume of transaction per day) are higher number of

middlemen, high marketing cost, fluctuations in prices, poor storage facilities, lack of market information on price, delay in settlement of sale proceeds, lack of drinking water facilities in market yard, high degree of dependency on middlemen for financial support, poor infrastructural facilities and absence of cooperative marketing.

Das et al. (2013b) while studying the fish consumers' behaviour at selected fish markets of Tripura identified several problems faced by fish farmers during purchase of fish which detains consumption of fish below desired level. Besides the factors like fish price (level and fluctuations), non-availability of fresh fish and preferred species, the study have identified poor marketing facility and unhygienic condition of market premises which, according to them, not only discourage people to purchase fish but also may cause health hazards.

Concluding remarks

From the above discussion it is clear that fish markets in the state is traditional, having structural defects and infrastructural inadequacies. The market facilities and services are generally of very poor order, showing serious shortcomings on the part of the authorities who collect revenue and are responsible for market upkeep and development. Fish farmers and marketing intermediaries are suffering from several problems and constraints which are of course discouraging factors for the sector to expand at its optimal level in the state.

All the problems need to be addressed with special care and utmost priority. Supervision and enforcement of regulations by public authorities are essential for making fish market competitive and efficient (Upadhyay, 2008).

Acknowledgement

Authors duly acknowledge the financial support provided by University Grants Commission (UGC) in the form of Minor Research Project (MRP) to carry out the present study. Authors are grateful to the authorities of Assam University, Silchar and Ramkrishna Mahavidyalaya, Kailashahar, Tripura for providing necessary institutional and infrastructural support and co-operation. Authors are thankful to the Department of Fisheries, Government of Tripura for providing necessary data and information.

References

- Bishnoi, M. K. (2005). *Marketing of Marine Fisheries*. New Delhi: Sonali Publication.
- Das, A., Kumar, N. R., Debnath, B., Barman, D., & Datta, M. (2013b). Fish Consumers' Behaviour at Selected Fish Markets of Tripura, India. *Fishery Technology*, 50, 185-190.
- Das, A., Upadhyay, A., Kumar, N. R., Prakash, S., Debnath, B., & Datta, M. (2013). Marketing profile of selected fish markets of Tripura. *Agricultural Economics Research Review*, 26 (1), 115-120.
- Ganesh Kumar, B., Datta, K., Joshi, P., Katiha, P., Suresh, R., Ravisankar, T., et al. (2008). Domestic fish marketing in India - changing structure, conduct, performance and policies. *Agricultural Economics Research Review*, 21 (Conference Number), 345-354.
- Pandey, M. R., & Chaturvedi, G. K. (1984). Inland fish marketing. In U. K. Srivastava, & S. Vathsala, *Inland fishery resources in India* (p. 564). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Sathiadhas, R., & Narayana Kumar, R. (1994, October-December). Price policy and fish marketing system in India. *Biology Education*, 225-241.
- Singh, K. (2004). *Micro-economic analysis of fish production and marketing systems in South Tripura District of Tripura*. Lembucherra, Tripura: College of Fisheries, Central Agricultural University
- Upadhyay, A. D. (2008). Economic analysis of fish marketing in Tripura. *Journal of Fisheries Economics and Development*, 9 (2), 12-20.