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केन्द्रीय समुद्री मात्स्पिकी CENTRAL MARINE FISHERIES अनुसंधान संस्थान RESEARCH INSTITUTE कोचिन, भारत COCHIN, INDIA

> भारतीय कृषि अनुसंधान परिषद INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

BENEFITS OF CO-OPERATIVE EFFORTS IN FISHING AND CATCH DISPOSAL SYSTEM AT VERSOVA, MAHARASHTRA*

Versova is a major centre of fishery activities in the district of Greater Bombay in Maharashtra and it is the largest among 23 fishing villages of the district. One characteristic feature of the fisher folks of the village is their high degree of mutual cooperation and help which has resulted in the development of a unique system of fish catch disposal.

A careful study of the fish catch disposal system at Versova revealed the following benefits:

- i) Conservation of fuel and savings in the fuel cost;
- ii) Best utilization of human resources;
- iii) Quick and proper disposal of catch in fresh condition and
- iv) Freedom from the clutches of money lenders, merchants and middle men.

The co-operation among the fishermen starts even before the fish is caught and continues till the catch is disposed of in the market. The following case study of *dol* net will reveal how their cooperation works for the benefit of the whole society.

The dol net is the main fishing gear of the Versova fishermen and is operated throughout the fishing season which commences from mid-September and lasts upto June. This is a bag net of fixed type and is operated with the help of a boat utilising tidal force as well as trained manual labour. The operation is carried out at different depths varying from about 9 to 36 m.

The dol fishermen form groups to operate at three to four stations at different depths, and throughout the year these groups stay together. Normally each group has four boats with it.

Baskets of different groups bear different markings and can be identified easily (Fig. 1). After 24 hours of fishing one boat collects the catches from all the boats and brings them to the landing centre.

Prepared by: S. G. Raje, V. V. Singh and J. D. Sarang Bombay Research Centre of Central Marine Fisheries Insiute, Bombay - 400 023.

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	Total profit (Rs.)	996300	664800	534853	333040	125440	231930	394129	537744	151992	3970228			
No. of haula 1440 1440 1488 1440 1354 1296 1392 1440 288	No. of hauis	1440	1440	1488	1440	1354	1296	1392	1440	288	11578			
Total profit of group fishing boats/total profit of single fishing boats = Rs. 8377879/ Rs. 3970228 = 2.11.														

Total profit of group fishing boats are 2.11 times more than the single fishing boats.

The members of the fisherman families identify their baskets by the markings and take their respective baskets either for drying the catch or to the market. The other boats of the group are sent back to the landing centre in rotation according to a scheduled programme and they return to the

fishing station with requisite quantity of drinking water, food, oil and other necessary articles.

An evaluation of the profit by group fishing boats, compared to the individual boats, during a period of nine months was made at Versova based

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on fuel cost and catch value. For comparison, six groups having four boats (40 ft and 50 ft) each were identified. Comparison was made with the profit of equal number of single fishing boats.

Results indicated that profit of the boats operating in groups was 2.10 and 2.11 times more for 40 ft and 50 ft boats respectively (Table 1). The reason for this double profit is the pooling of the human resources by the groups which enable them to take more number of hauls and also to save upon the fuel cost.

The system works even better on land. There are three transport societies now and these have



Fig 1. Baskets with markings for identification

changed the earlier scenario when the fishermen were vertually exploited by the middle men. As transportation charges were almost double in earlier days and vehicles were not moving from landing centre till they were full with the catch, the catch was not reaching wholesale or retail market in time and the fishermen were prone to exploitation. Since these societies have the facilities of cold storage and ice plant, it is ensured that no catch is lost even if there is a delay in transportation.

Marketing of the catch is done at the Shivaji Wholesale Market at Bombay through a fresh fish stall of the society. Complete account is maintained neatly even in the absence of the fishermen, and money due to the market basket is credited to the account of the respective basket owner.

In addition to this, some retailers are having some sort of understanding with fishser folk to collect their baskets with markings from the trucks and sell the catch on 10% commission basis. This saves the time of the fisher folk which they utilize mainly for the processing of other fishes.

The whole system is organised in a disciplined manner with the full co-operation of all its members; ultimately saving lot of their energy, time, fuel and money for increased profit.