

# Price Spread of Marine Fish And need for Cooperative Fish Marketing

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**I**ndia is heavily depending on its natural resources for economic development and fisheries is one among them. Marine fisheries contribute about 50 to 60 percent of our total fish production. India is endowed with a long coast line of 8129 km and an Exclusive Economic Zone of 2.02 million square kms. There are about 2251 fish landing centres and 3638 marine fishing villages located all along our coastal belt. Currently (1998), about 5 lakh fishermen families with a total population of 3 million people are living in these villages wholly depending on marine fishing for their livelihood security. Marine fish production increased from about 5.43 lakh tonnes in 1950-51 to 15.15 lakh tonnes in 1980-81 and 24 lakh tonnes in 1996-97. Though the production and income generated from capture fisheries increased substantially over the years, the coastal rural fisherfolk could not get much of the benefits of the economic development taken place in our country since independence. Effective distribution and efficient marketing of perishable fish is inevitably essential to ensure remunerative price and enable the fishermen to earn higher income. Marine fish marketing in India is characterized by monopsony and oligopsony conditions and hence, the fishermen are unable to get maximum advantage of high price prevalent in the consumer markets.

In the exploitation, marketing and management of common property resources like marine fisheries community level collective action is well recognised as an Senior Scientist, CMFRI, Cochin-682 014.

effective tool for attaining sustainable production, maintaining distributive justice and gaining maximum social benefit. The cooperative movement has been the mainstay of people's participation in the nation building through collective action. The contribution of cooperatives to the development of agriculture and to various other sectors of the economy has been noteworthy. The National Federation of Fishermen's cooperatives Ltd. is the apex body of fishermen cooperatives dedicated to the development and growth of fishery cooperative sector. There are about 9369 primary societies with a total membership of 0.9561 million in the fishery cooperative sector linked with 108 central (Dist./regional) level federations and 17 State level federations under the National Federation of Fishermen's Cooperatives Ltd. Although consistent effort has been taken to involve fishermen in cooperatives and ensure community participation for the common benefit both in production and marketing segments, the success at national level is not quite laudable due to the intrinsic socio-economic problems inherent in the marine fisheries sector.

Both in production and marketing sectors of marine fisheries, fishery cooperatives have to play a greater role to improve the socio-economic status of coastal rural fisherfolk. Cooperative fish marketing will be immensely helpful to enhance the standard of living of fishermen by ensuring a fair share of consumers' rupee to the producers and to reduce the influence of intermediaries in the marketing system. The present account briefly highlights (i) the fishermen's share in consumers' rupee for different varieties of fish at macro level in the maritime states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and (ii) the distribution pattern of consumers rupee to the producers and intermediaries for commercially important varieties of fish and (iii) comparative advantages of cooperative fish marketing in ensuring remunerative price to fisherfolk.

There is a continuous increase in demand and price of fish both in domestic and export markets. About 85% of the marine fish catch is channelised in the domestic market and the rest in export market. The increase in fish prices is comparatively higher than the increase in prices of foodgrains and other livestock products. In the domestic market, there has been two to three fold increase in wholesale and retail prices of different varieties of fish during the last two decades. Increase in cost of production of fish is more than compensated with the rise in prices of almost all varieties of fishes. The income generated by marine fisheries at landing centre level is estimated at Rs. 7410 crores during 1995. The value of marine fish at consumer level comes about Rs. 15,000 crore almost double the amount of the farmer, in which the export earnings alone account for about Rs 4050 crores. The marketing sector of marine fisheries provides employment to about 11 lakh persons in our country.

In case of marine fish marketing, fish travels long distances from coastal areas to the interior parts of the country. Greater uncertainties in fish landings and thereby supply of fish, high degree of perishability, assembling of fish from too many coastal landing centres, too many varieties and consequent too many demand patterns and difficulty in maintaining the quality of fish are some of the major problems confronted in fish marketing. Very wide seasonal variations in the prices

of different varieties of fish have been observed in primary, wholesale and retail markets. There is also considerable variation in the price of same variety of fish between different regions.

Fishermens' share in consumers' rupee is the best yardstick to measure the efficiency of fish marketing system. It is estimated that hardly about 5% of the marine fish is traded through fishermens' organisation or cooperatives and the rest by private marketing channels. Innumerable number of intermediaries are involved in the transaction process of marine fish and maximum fish is passing through "Fishermen-wholesaler-Retailer-consumer" marketing channel. Fishermens' share in consumers' rupee in the private marketing channel for commercially important varieties of fish in different maritime states is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
Fishermens' share in consumers' rupee for selected varieties of fish  
in different maritime states during (1996-97) (paise per rupee)

Name of fish	Guj	Mah	Kar	Kerala	T. Nadu	A.P.
Seerfish	71	81	40	65	49	49
Pomfrets	64	68	46	43	51	53
Barracudas	-	36	55	53	54	24
Tuna	63	43	-	51	60	36
Sharks	45	36	40	63	60	17
Catfish	37	76	35	58	63	33
Mackerel	50	50	33	50	55	26
Sardines	60	57	54	43	63	58
Ribbonfish	83	60	41	37	55	36
Rays	-	-	-	30	57	40
Whitebaits	-	-	33	26	48	22
Lizardfish	44	43	31	30	53	36
Goatfish	-	-	-	60	60	42
Threadfin	43	-	-	-	53	23
Croakers	56	45	38	31	63	27
Silverbellies	-	-	-	35	32	21
Big-jawed jumper	-	-	60	45	67	44
Mulletts	-	45	42	59	46	38
Half & full beaks	-	-	-	61	65	-
Cephalopods	63	75	71	71	51	44

Fishermen in Gujarat received 37% (cat fish) to 83% (ribbon fish) of consumers' rupee. The producers could receive higher share in consumers' rupee for ribbon fish due to its rapidly picking up export market in recent years. Fishermens'

share in consumers' rupee for different varieties of fish ranges from 36% to 81% in Maharashtra, 31% to 71% in Karnataka, 26% to 71% in Kerala, 30% to 67% in Tamil Nadu, and 17% to 53% in Andhra Pradesh. The percentage distribution of consumers' rupee for different varieties of fish to producers, wholesalers, retailers and marketing costs during 1996-97 on all India level is worked out and given in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Percentage distribution of consumers' rupee for different varieties of marine fish in India during 1996-97

Name of fish	Share of			
	Fishermen	Handling & Transportation	Whole Salers	Retailers
Seerfish	68	6	12	14
Pomfrets	60	7	9	24
Barracudas	40	9	30	21
Tuna	45	9	28	18
Sharks	43	10	32	15
Catfish	56	10	10	24
Mackerel	50	9	11	30
Sardines	33	12	23	32
Ribbonfish	48	10	12	30
Rays	47	13	22	28
Whitebaits	40	12	28	20
Lizardfish	35	12	15	38
Goatfish	57	13	16	14
Threadfin	42	9	20	29
Croakers	48	11	14	27
Silverbellies	30	15	8	47
Big-jawed jumper	55	10	9	26
Mulletts	41	9	17	33
Half & full beaks	65	9	10	16
Cephalopods	65	10	5	20

The fishermen's share in consumers' rupee ranges from 30 to 68% for different varieties. Marketing costs including transportation ranged 6 to 13% of the consumers' rupee. Wholesalers received 5 to 32% and retailers from 14 to 47% of consumers' rupee for different varieties of marine fish.

Inspite of ever increasing demand and high price of marine fish both in internal and external markets, the influence of intermediaries in the marketing process could not be challenged and still 32 to 68% of consumers' rupee for

different varieties of fish is going towards marketing margins. Marketing through fishermen cooperatives and corporations has been undertaken by various state governments during the last three decades. Fisheries cooperatives could achieve limited success in Gujarat, Maharashtra and few pockets of other maritime states. Fish marketing carried out by fishermen societies in Kanyakumari and Tuticorin regions of Tamil Nadu during 1991-92 indicated that the fishermen received 60 to 80 percent of consumers' rupee for different varieties of fish. Hence to protect the interests of both the producers and the consumers it is essential to introduce and expand the cooperative fish marketing system throughout our country.

There has been no regulation even in major markets in the internal marketing system which usually helps only the middlemen. Currently there is no proper grading, weighing and quality control at any level of fish marketing. Most of the existing malpractices can be avoided by revitalising the cooperative fish marketing system in our country. Further product diversification and promotion of value added products are essential to boost our marine product export earnings. Fisheries cooperatives can provide substantial employment opportunities in the coastal rural areas by involving itself in the preparation of value added products suitable for exports.

The successful fisheries cooperatives are not only engaged in marketing but also involved in the supply of essential inputs and credit to fishermen. It is well known that the open access marine fisheries require some sort of regulations to keep the fishing effort under control for reaping maximum economic yield. Fisheries cooperatives can play a key role in the management of the overexploited in-shore fisheries. The concept of community participation in the management of marine fisheries can be introduced by creating adequate awareness among fishermen and encouraging "cooperative fishing" instead of "competitive fishing" to keep the level of fishing intensity at the controllable level for attaining sustainable production.