

Sustainable livelihood approach of prawn production and marketing systems in Mymensingh, Bangladesh

N. Ahmed*, M. Sultana, M. Podder and M. Bulbul

Department of Fisheries Management, Bangladesh Agricultural University
Mymensingh2202, Bangladesh

*Corresponding author

Email address: nesar_2000@yahoo.com (N. Ahmed)

Abstract

An investigation was carried out in Phulpur upazila, Mymensingh to examine the current production practices of freshwater giant prawn, *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* and its marketing systems with sustainable livelihood approach. The livelihoods of a considerable number of rural poor are associated with prawn production in Phulpur upazila. Based on a sample of 50 farmers, about 94% farmers were found to culture prawn with fish in their ponds. Only 4% and 2% farmers were found to culture prawn-fish-dike crops and only prawn respectively. Prawn marketing is almost exclusively a preserve of the private sector where the livelihoods of a large number of people are associated with its distribution and marketing systems. The market chain from producers to consumers passes through a number of intermediaries. About 40% of the produced prawns are exported and the rest 60% are sold to local markets. The price of prawn depends on quality, size and weight. The average farm-gate price of prawn varied from Tk. 110 to 160/kg, whereas its market price varied from Tk. 150 to 350/kg. Most of the farmers and traders have improved their socio-economic conditions through prawn farming and marketing activities. However, concerns arise about the long-term sustainability of prawn farming and marketing systems due to lack of technical knowledge of prawn farming, poor road and transport facilities, higher transport cost, poor supply of ice, lack of cash and credit facilities. It is therefore essential to provide institutional and organizational support and credit facilities for sustainable prawn production and marketing systems.

Key words: Prawn production, Marketing, Livelihood approach

Research findings

- The livelihoods of prawn farmers are associated with prawn production and marketing.

- The market chain from the farmers to the consumers passes through a number of intermediaries: local agents, wholesalers and retailers.
- The average farm-gate price of prawn varied from Tk. 110 to 160/kg, while the consumers' price varied between Tk. 150 and 350/kg in local markets. Most of the farmers and traders have improved their socio-economic conditions through prawn farming and marketing activities
- Constraints of prawn farming and marketing systems as reported by the farmers and traders were: lack of technical knowledge of prawn farming, poor road and transport facilities, higher transport cost, poor supply of ice, and scarcity of money and credit facilities.

Policy implications

- Considering the lack of technical knowledge in prawn farmers, training on integrated prawn farming should be provided to the farmers with the help of DOF, BFRI and NGOs.
- Improvement of prawn transport, handling, preservation and shipment facilities are essential to supply quality product.
- A sufficient number of ice factories should be established at the farm site for preservation and marketing of quality prawn.
- Prawn market operators should be provided with training on prawn handling, icing, preservation and curing.
- Improvement and maintenance of hygienic conditions of prawn landing centers and markets are essential for producing quality product.

Livelihood implications

In spite of poor resources, most of the farmers and traders have improved their socio-economic conditions through prawn farming and marketing activities. Prawn farming and marketing have clearly brought out a positive change in their economic activities. Farmers and traders have broadly improved their food consumption, standards of living, purchasing power, choice, and ability. However, poor resources, weak transforming structures and process, vulnerability context, poor institutional support and lack of extension services – all identified as constraints for long-term sustainability as well as for sustainable livelihoods to the prawn farmers, traders and associated people. It is therefore essential for institutional, organizational and government support towards more research, extension and knowledge of prawn farming and marketing for sustainable livelihoods.