

Capacity building programmes by NETFISH, MPEDA

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An evaluation of the programmes conducted by the Network for Fish Quality Management and Sustainable Fishing (NETFISH), a registered society under the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), was taken up as part of a Consultancy Agreement between NETFISH-MPEDA and ICAR-CIFT during 2015-16.

The focus of the grassroots level capacity building programmes of NETFISH are fish quality management, conservation of fish resources as well as sustainable fishing and the target stakeholders are basically the fishermen and fisherwomen; workers in the fish landing centres and harbours; processing workers and technicians; etc. Regular and special programmes are organised to improve the value chain so that the seafood products produced and exported from India meet the quality standards as desired by the importing countries.

Programmes organised at harbours and landing centres in four states, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, were assessed. Activities at 18 harbours and landing centres were surveyed and 217 persons were interviewed for this purpose and information or data gaps were augmented with Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in most places.

Over the period 2008-09 to 2014-15, the number of programmes conducted by NETFISH averaged around 2721 programmes annually (inclusive of all programmes). This is about 272 programmes per major centre.

The NETFISH has a yearly action plan in which targets are fixed for the number of training programmes to be organized per centre. Each state (centre) has a Coordinator. Since the focus of the programmes is on quality improvement, the programmes are generally based in harbours and landing centres, on-board fishing

vessels, pre-processing and processing centres; as well as centres engaged in drying fish.

The programmes included Landing Centre – Quality; Landing Centre – Conservation; On board quality; Pre-processing – quality and safety aspects; Processing – quality and safety aspects and Dry-fish – quality and safety aspects. It is observed that 69.98 per cent of all programmes conducted were at landing centres and harbours.

This is the most crucial link in the seafood value chain and required major attention. It has been proven that the issues of quality of fish arises because of poor infrastructural facilities in the landing centres and harbours which is further multiplied by unhygienic handling practices. Some of the special programmes organised included street plays, medical camps, clean up drives, rallies, programmes in schools and door-to-door campaigns.

The average age of the beneficiaries varied from 33.26 in Gujarat to 43.28 in Kerala. The average age overall was 33 years. It is clear that the beneficiaries of the NETFISH training programmes at various centres were in the active working age group. It is also an age group with responsive faculties and so any teaching or learning process should show results. About 86 per cent of the respondents were literate. The percentage of literates was maximum in Kerala followed by Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

The evaluation study focused on harbour-based programmes on *Quality* and *Conservation*. The evaluation was conducted using a survey tool, which consisted of three broad sections – dealing with the pedagogy of the training, impact measured by levels of awareness and the application of the information passed on to the beneficiaries.

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General satisfaction regarding training programme

The harbours and landing centres are the first point of fish sale and it is this fish that enters into the domestic markets as well as goes for processing in the seafood factories catering to the export markets for the country. As such it is very important that hygiene and sanitation are maintained in the harbours and landing centres so that the quality of the highly-perishable commodity like fish is maintained. The hygiene and sanitation training is conducted both onboard for crew of fishing vessels and in harbours and landing centres for workers in these centres. The overall rating (pooled data) of the harbour-based programmes on quality was 'Very Good' for 46.58 per cent of the respondents and 'Good' for 34.60 per cent of the respondents. Out of the total sampling, 81.18 per cent of the respondents were of opinion that the training programme on quality aspects in the harbours and landing centres was good.

PROGRAMMES ON CONSERVATION WERE INTRODUCED AS A MEASURE TO CREATE AWARENESS AMONG FISHERS AND FISH WORKERS ON THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF DESTRUCTIVE GEAR, ON THE IMPROVEMENTS THAT CAN BE MADE IN GEAR TO REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS, ON JUVENILE FISHING AND OTHER IMPACTS ON THE RESOURCE BASE THAT SUSTAINS THE FISHERIES OF THE COUNTRY.

As far as the pedagogy of the training is concerned, more than 95 per cent of the beneficiaries agreed that the topics and content were relevant to their area of operation.

They were also satisfied with the timing of the training and the methods used and facilities provided. About 97.22 per cent of them felt that the training materials were useful. The coordinators got high scores of more than 97 per cent on effectiveness and they also went on record that they were encouraged to participate in the discussions and in the whole training process.

Programmes on conservation were introduced as a measure to create awareness among fishers and fish

workers on the harmful effects of destructive gear, on the improvements that can be made in gear to reduce environmental impacts, on juvenile fishing and other impacts on the resource base that sustains the fisheries of the country.

Pooled data revealed that 48.32 per cent of the respondents felt that the training was 'Very Good' and 35.51 per cent felt it was 'Good'. About 15 per cent had no opinion on the training and were indifferent to the same. Results similar to the programme on Quality were observed as far as the pedagogy was concerned, with more than 95 per cent giving good scores for the parameters for satisfaction of the training programme.

Awareness related to fish quality management

The awareness levels of harbour/landing centre workers ranged from 77-99 per cent for different parameters selected. Adoption of these practices is what would make the training programmes effective. The stress of the programmes on quality has been on personal hygiene and sanitation as well as that of the premises of work. This requires the practice of several specific activities like use of clean boots, gloves and mouth pieces; avoiding spitting and chewing tobacco and other intoxicants and smoking; maintaining the auction hall and harbour in clean and hygienic condition etc.

The application of the 'learnt' or 'acquired' information is the crux of the training. This is what actually gives a picture of whether the training has been effective or not. As per the respondent responses, basic practices like hygienic handling of fish and ice, use of plastic shovels, maintenance of personal hygiene, avoidance of cutting, cleaning and processing of fish in harbour etc. are adopted in the harbours that have been assessed in this study. However, observation of the survey team has found that the adoption rates are not as high as perceived by the respondents. This indicates that there is a disconnect between the awareness of the beneficiaries and on-the-ground reality. It was observed that there is lack of basic infrastructural facilities in the harbour like sufficient potable water and ice, roads and transportation facilities, availability of auction hall and raised platforms, suitable implements like plastic crates, shovels etc. which hamper the implementation of standard protocols to ensure quality. Lack of sufficient toilets in the harbours, and if present in inconvenient locations making access difficult, force the workers to spoil the immediate surroundings. These are common issue in almost all the 18 harbours or landing centres surveyed in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

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On the whole, the training activities of NETFISH have had a positive impact on the levels of awareness on hygienic handling of fish and in the need to maintain cleanliness in the harbours. However, most harbours and landing centres were found to be having infrastructural and operational problems, which make the adoption of some of the practices difficult. The multiplicity of stakeholder organizations involved in the management of the harbours and their lack of convergence in activities make the issues very serious.

The awareness levels on the topics covered under the programme on conservation at the harbour and landing centre ranged from 60–99 per cent for different

parameters selected.

The awareness level on use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) was least, whereas that on the trawl ban was the maximum with 99 per cent of the respondents aware about it. During the evaluation study, it was observed that the fishers had complete compliance to trawl ban, as it is legally binding on them. They were also positive towards adopting eco-friendly fishing methods and controlling marine pollution and protecting marine areas. NETFISH has been propagating and supplying square mesh cod end and also stressing on the need to use the CIFT-TED. But of the adoption levels were low at 33 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.



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