

In the choppy sea of note ban, fishing sector sailed on trust

Middlemen And Boat Owners Kept The Industry Afloat During Crisis

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Kochi: The demonetisation was disruptive for many commercial activities, but the fishing operations went on undisturbed for almost two weeks, because of the 'trust' stakeholders had on each other and the readiness to defer payment provided by 'tharakans' (middlemen) and boat owners, says a socio-economic survey by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

The study covering 200 respondents - mainly boat owners/ representatives, labourers (crew/harbour labourers), traders (exporters/wholesalers), middlemen, retailers and consumers - was presented at a meeting of traditional fishermen held at CMFRI to discuss problems related to the industry.

The study elicited information on the details related to fishing operations, crew size, landings and the price realised. The traders (exporters, wholesalers and retailers) were queried on the changes in the quantum of transaction and prices (paid and realised) during the two

PRICE DIFFERENCE OF FISHES

Species	Pre-demonetisation (₹/kg)*	Post-demonetisation (₹/kg)#
Sardine	₹141.67	₹110.83
Mackerel	₹161.67	₹132.92
Threadfin breams	₹160.00	₹125.00
Black pomfret	₹355.67	₹315.00
Red snapper	₹246.67	₹216.67
Anchovy	₹150.00	₹120.00

*Pre demonetisation (23 Oct-7 Nov 2016), # Post demonetisation (9 Nov-23 Nov 2016)

time periods (pre and post monetisation. It analysed the extent of different fishing operations by mechanised, motorised and non-mechanised sector in the landing centres/harbours of Munambam, Chellanam, Fort Cochin, Cochin fisheries harbour and Kalamukku.

"We gauged the difference between the fishing operations during the pre-demonetised (prior to November 8) and post demonetised period (9-23 November 2016) covering a fortnight. The fishing operations include the number of trips, days of fishing, depth of fishing, crew size, crew share, operating

cost etc. The traders from Broadway, Thevara, Thoppumpady, Chambakkara and Kaloore fish markets were interviewed for assessing the status of the business during these days," said Shyam S Salim, principal scientist, socio-economic evaluation and technology transfer division (SEETTD), who led the study.

In addition, 60 consumers were interviewed on their status of fish consumption and the reasons for low consumption during the non-availability of the low denomination legal tenders.

"Everywhere, the payment to

labourers were done by the middlemen or owners. If they are not paid, they wouldn't come for fishing. This was ensured. Other dealings like payment for fuel and other expenses were handled on a 'take forward or pay later' basis. It actually paved the way for the sector slowly embarking on a transparent, cashless and identified banking system," he added.

One of the reasons for ensuring that there was no collapse was because the exporters brought the fishes off the landing centres and the middlemen made the payments.

However, the bottom players in the value chain viz., the retailers and consumers were affected due to non-cash transactions and non-availability of smaller denominations, the study said.

The researchers said that the general expectation among the community is that the slight slowdown will only be short-lived and that the fishing economy will rebound once the systems adjust to the new normal. The effects can be evaluated only after catch and effort data becomes available in a few months time, the study said.