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## MARKETING OF MOLLUSCS

### 87. MARKETING OF MOLLUSCS : INDIGENOUS MARKETING

— Theme Paper

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Marketing is a most important aspect of the exploitation of shellfish resources as it involves selling of the harvested shellfish which determines the income which they can fetch. Marketing of molluscs has received the attention of the Government of India and Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute since forties of this century. One of the early publications of the Government of India on fisheries is on the marketing of fish in India which also deals with marketing of molluscan shellfish in the country.

Marketing of molluscs is carried out in India using time old methods. The fishermen who exploit the molluscs sell them to shellfish merchants, who sell them either directly to the consumer or to a retail merchant who finally sell them to the public. Although molluscs are utilized as food only in some places mostly in coastal areas, a large number of others are exploited for a variety of other purposes and therefore these are gathered, processed and marketed.

Marketing of molluscs used for various purposes differ in the spread and pattern of organisation and can be distinguished into those used as food, those used as a source of lime which has manifold uses, those which yield gems, those which are of decorative value or have traditional use and those which are purchased by shell collectors.

#### MOLLUSCS USED AS FOOD

Clams, mussels and oysters fished from different coastal villages and towns along the east and west coasts are marketed in the same

places and as well as neighbouring villages and towns including nearly interior places. There is large scale consumption of clams and mussels along the west coast as there is awareness of the value of the shellfish and they are very much relished. The clams marketed are *Meretrix casta*, *M. meretrix*, *Katelysia opima* and *Villorita* sp. The price of the clams varies in different states. The price of *Meretrix* spp. varies from Rs. 2/- to Rs. 3/- per 10 kg in Kerala, Rs. 5/- to Rs. 7/- in Karnataka and Rs. 6/- at Muthkad, near Madras. Large quantities amounting to 5,000 – 6,000 tonnes of the clam *Katelysia opima* are exploited from Ashtamudi lake and the fishermen extract and boil the clam meat and sell at Rs. 12/- to 15/- per kg to the exporters or their agents. *Villorita cyprinoides* are collected in huge quantities from Vembanad lake and Ashtamudi lake in Kerala and Nethravathi, Gurpur, Udyavara. Swarna and Sita estuaries in Karnataka and marketed. In Kerala the clams are sold shell on at Rs. 2/- per 23 kg. In Karnataka the prices Re 1/- to Rs. 1.50 per kg.

In southern Kerala the brown mussel is sold at a number of places like Kovalam, Vizhinjam, Mulloor, Pulinkudi and Chowarah and the price ranges from Rs. 3 - to Rs. 7/- per 100 mussels. During the lean season the price goes up to Rs. 10/- per 100. In Colachel - Muttom area the price varies from Rs. 2/- to Rs. 5/- per 100. While the above are the retail prices of clams and mussels the fishermen who exploit the shellfish get much lower price selling them per basket.

Oysters are collected by fishermen and sold at Rs. 5/= to Rs. 6/= per kg in a few places in

Kerala. The Tamil Nadu State Fisheries Department sells oysters from Ennore at Rs 20/= per 100 oysters.

The Integrated Fisheries Project, Cochin has processed meat of oysters cultured by CMFRI at Tuticorin and meat of mussels and clams also, canned them in lime or in smoked form in oil and sold them in several cities of the country. The canned shellfish meat has been very well received and a market could be built up of steady suppliers could be assured by adopting culture practices.

#### MOLLUSCS USED AS SOURCE OF LIME

Molluscan shells mostly those of clams and to some extent oysters which are subfossil deposits are collected from several areas on the east and west coasts in huge quantities and supplied to calcium carbide, cement or lime companies. The cost of the shells varies in different place places from Rs. 160/= to Rs. 300/= per tonne. Live clams present in the vicinity are also harvested and sold for lime preparation.

#### MOLLUSCS WHICH YIELD GEMS

The pearl oysters are valuable resources yielding pearls. The pearl oyster resources in the Gulf of Mannar which are under the control of Tamil Nadu Government exploited until 1961 by conducting pearl fisheries. At present, pearls are imported in large quantities annually and marketed. Pearls of golden yellow colour are held in great esteem in India. The pearls are imported via Bombay and sold in the several cities in our country. The price of the pearls depends on the perfection of form, lustre and absence of blemishes.

#### MOLLUSCS WHICH ARE OF DECORATIVE VALUE OR HAVE TRADITIONAL USES

The shells of a variety of molluscs with beautiful shape and colours like *Turbo marmoratus*, *Trochus niloticus*, sacred chank *Xancus pyrum*, the five fingered chank *Lambis lambis*,

cowries, cone shells, *Hemifusus cochlidium*, *Cassis rufa* and button shells which are collected diving or in fishing nets are cleaned and marketed in pilgrim centres like Rameswaram, Kanyakumari, Dwarka, Banaras and cities like Madras, Bombay and Goa. There is increasing demand for shells as well as shell products like lamp shades, ash trays figures of plants of birds. Some large scale firms and a few hundred small dealers market the shells and shell products offering livelihood to a large number of persons.

#### MOLLUSCS PURCHASED BY SHELL COLLECTORS

The shell dealers mentioned above deal with shells of a large number of species which amount to a few hundreds for which there is demand from shell collectors mostly in the other countries.

Only very small portion of the 20,000 tonnes of cephalopod production, viz., squids and cuttlefishes are marketed in the coastal parts of our country. The squids and cuttlefish are marketed mostly in fresh condition and small quantities in cured form after drying in sunlight.

#### AREAS REQUIRING INVESTIGATION

The studies made so far on marketing of molluscs in our country are those which have been carried out along with those on exploitation or fisheries. Marketing surveys have to be given priority to determine the turn-over of shellfishes marketed and study the trends in marketing of molluscan shellfishes in successive years. There is good scope for expanding marketing of the different groups of molluscs and molluscan products if adequate efforts are made. The fishermen who exploit the molluscan shellfish generally are not satisfied with the price which they get. This is partly due to the fact that they have to accept whatever price the shellfish merchants pay. This problem has to be solved and efforts are required to see that the fisherman gets satisfactory price for the shellfish fished.