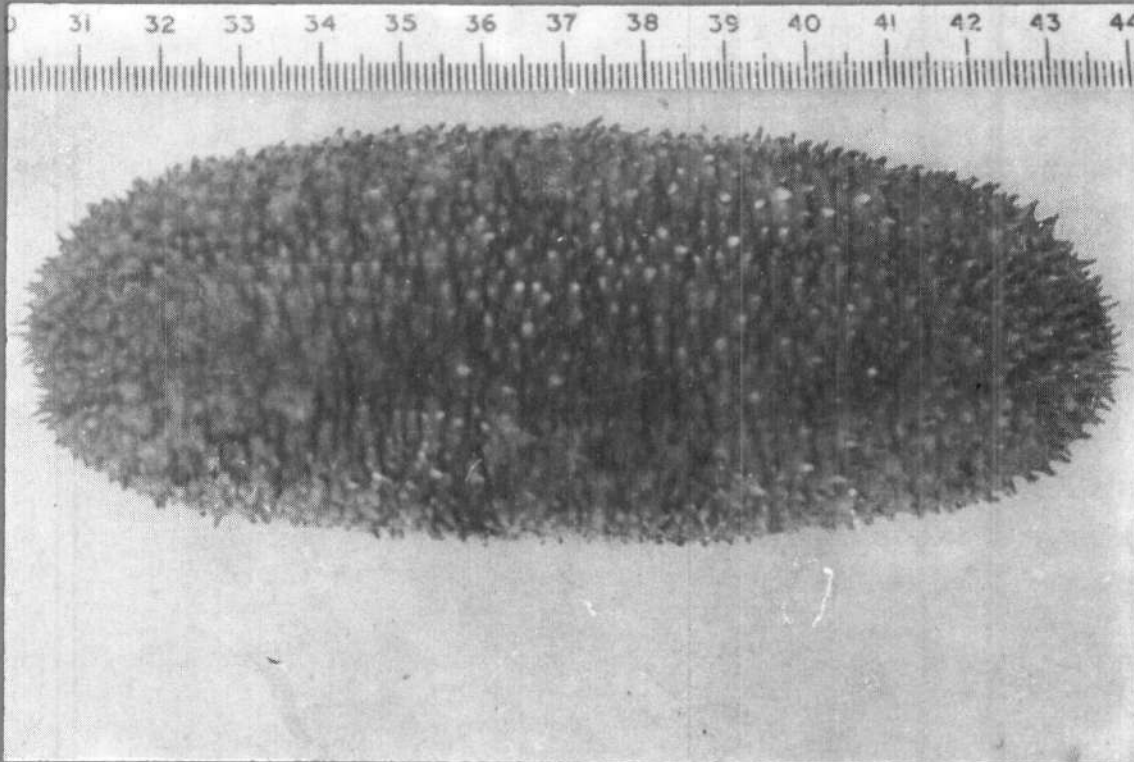




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TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR FISHER-WOMEN ON PREPARATION OF FOOD FROM SEAWEED — AN EVALUATION STUDY *

Seaweed is one of the important renewable marine living resources. It includes all macroscopic algae growing in the sea and in brackish coastal waters. They grow abundantly along the Pampan, Mandapam and Rameswaram coasts in Tamil Nadu. Seaweeds are extensively used in the manufacture of food and medicine and in industries for the extraction of agar agar and sodium alginate. Seaweed recipes for preparing jam, jellies, wafers and pickles are available.

With the objective of extending the methods of preparation of seaweed as food which can help to

increase the income generating opportunities and nutrient consumption of fishermen, a three month training programme was conducted at Rameswaram for 30 fisher-women under the "Training Rural Youth For Self Employment Scheme (TRYSEM)". This was conducted by the Centre For Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (CFWARD), a voluntary agency at Rameswaram in collaboration with CMFRI. The study was conducted aiming assessing the usefulness of the training in terms of knowledge gained, impressions of trainees and constraints involved in the utilization of the knowledge.

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Procedure

An interview schedule was made use of to gather the required information. To assess the knowledge, a knowledge test was conducted before and after training. Information was also collected on socio-economic profile of the trainees and their impressions on the programme. The training design was also evaluated for its suitability to the trainees.

Socio-economic profile of the trainees

All the trainees were between the age group of 18 and 35 years as per the norms under the TRYSEM programme. A maximum of 33% of the respondents had primary level of education followed by high school (27%) and secondary education (20%). The houses were classified as pucaa, semi-pucca, and kutcha according to the material used for the construction of wall and roof. A good majority (73%) of them owned kutcha houses and 20% had semi-pucca houses while only 7% had pucca houses. The overall profile clearly indicated low socio-economic status of the trainees. Regarding occupation, about 33% of the trainees were involved in fishery related activities and 7% in their own tea shops, while the remaining were engaged in household activities. Majority of the respondents (70%) had nuclear families with an average family size of 5.

Mass media contact

Only 37% owned radio and out of them only 13% used radio as a source of information. The fishermen were getting weather forecasting through All India Radio, but no information about fisheries was received by them. Only 3% of them possessed television and the rest could not afford to procure it. Newspaper was used by 30% for gathering day-to-day information. Literature related to fisheries/seaweed was not used as a source of information because they were few in number and mostly written in English.

Assessment of knowledge level

The knowledge before training was assessed by administering to the respondents a knowledge test consisting of 21 questions. The knowledge level was categorised as high, medium and low based on the scores assigned.

Majority of the trainees (97%) came under the low knowledge group. Only 3% of them fell under the medium category. This may be due to the non-availability of the information through the sources contacted.

Gain in knowledge

To assess the gain in knowledge, the same set of 21 questions were administered to the trainees at the end of the training and the scores were classified as earlier and compared with pre-training knowledge level.

After the training 57% were found to have medium knowledge, 37% high and 6% low suggesting considerable gain in the level of knowledge. Detailed and thorough knowledge about different aspects of seaweed utilization was given to the trainees using extension methods such as lectures and demonstrations.

Evaluation of the training design

The training methods and the design were evaluated in terms of the preference of venue, duration, methods and number of trainees. A maximum of 50% of the trainees preferred the research station as the venue of the training, while 37% preferred their own village and 13% preferred the nearby village. Preference of research station was due to the fact that they desired to know and see the technologies at the originating place itself.

The duration of training was an important component on which the trainees were asked to indicate their preferences and views. Fifty four per cent of the trainees preferred a training duration of one month, which would help them to thoroughly learn the skills. Forty six per cent preferred a duration of less than a month in view of the time involved in being away from home.

The success of training programmes entirely depends on the use of effective modes of communication. It was seen that demonstration was the most preferred (86%) method of training. Nobody preferred lecture class alone. However, while 5% preferred lecture and discussion 3% preferred discussion alone and 6% exhibition-cum-discussion.

TABLE 1. Impression of the trainees on the utility of training

	Number	Percentage
Gain in knowledge	30	100
Sharing of knowledge	30	100
Overall satisfaction	27	90
Practical utility	25	83
Relevance of subject	21	70
Income earning opportunities	17	57

The evaluation of the training programme indicated that the programme was very useful in imparting the knowledge regarding different aspects of seaweed utilization. The trainees felt that they could usefully practice the new ideas to improve their nutrition as well as develop income generating activities based on it. However, the adoption of

the technology mainly depends on the demand for seaweed products. Increasing the awareness of the coastal community on seaweed culture and utilization through need-based extension programme will help in expanding the employment opportunities in coastal areas.