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A NOTE ON THE EXTENSION OF PRAWN CULTURE TECHNOLOGY TO WOMEN IN A COASTAL VILLAGE*

Prawn farming is a potential area of income generation for women in fishing villages. Observations indicate that women in small scale prawn farming households do have involvement in the traditional system. They also play an important role in the management of other activities such as livestock rearing and vegetable cultivation in their farms. Given more information and training they can be usefully involved in the adoption of the technology and also management of the farms. This can also encourage small farmers to directly take up farming without leasing out the fields and thus derive more income. With the above aim a programme for extending the technology of prawn (*P. indicus*) was carried out at South Chellanam fishing village in Ernakulam District during 1992-'93. The programmes were conducted as a part of the research project of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, on Empowerment of Women through Extension Education.

The programme consisted of a lecture in prawn farming, distribution of literature, training in seed collected, group discussion on the constraints in prawn culture, house calls, farm visits, water and soil testing and demonstration of the technology.

Demonstration of the technology

A 10 cent canal in a 60 cent land with coconut trees and shrubs was selected for demonstration. This belonged to a marine fishermen family under joint family system. The daughter-in-law of the family was the one who evinced interest in trying the technology in the family's holding. She was motivated through a lecture in prawn culture and training in seed collection conducted in the village. This programme was organised through 'Matsyamahlavedi', a fisherwomen's society in the village of which she was a member. Matsyamahlavedi has been adopted by the Institute for carrying out studies under the present research project.



Fig. 1. The coconut grove canal where the prawn culture demonstration was carried out.

Inputs

The costs of sluice gate, prawn seed and hire charges for the pump set for draining out water for eradication were met by the Institute. The feed developed by CMFRI was used for farming. The labour for pond preparation, day-to-day operations, watch and ward and harvest was contributed by the family members.

Input-output details

Input	Cost (Rs)
Sluice gate (depreciation)	100
Seed	140
Eradication	350
Feed	386
Fertilizer	25
Total	1,001
Production	30 kg
Value	1,762
Net profit	1,762-1,001 = Rs 761

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Fig. 2. Prawn harvest.



Fig. 3. The farm-woman with some of harvested prawns.

Impact of extension programmes

Thirty two women and eight men directly participated in the programmes. A professional fish collector from canals and prawn fields engaged herself in collection of fish seed from sea surf and canals and earned an income of Rs 500 within a period of two months.

Another woman introduced the practice of pounding the ground nut cake pieces for feeding the prawn in her family farm. Many prawn farmers gained knowledge on the feeding practices. They could be shown the ill-effects of faulty



Fig. 4. A back yard poultry unit set up with the help of a voluntary organisation.



Fig. 5. The vegetable grown in the backyard of a fisherman.

stocking and feeding practices in their own farms as well as other fields in the locality as indicated by the phytoplankton bloom and oxygen levels resulting in premature harvest. They could also be educated on avoiding high cost owing to irrational feeding and use of imported feeds and ill-effects of administering hormones.

A member of Matsyamahilavedi came forward to provide her field for future extension programmes sharing the cost of the inputs and also providing leadership for organizing women and men from prawn farming households.

Future programmes

The SEETT Division jointly with the PNP Division and the KVK has initiated the work of extending the technology including on farm feed preparation to women in more prawn farming households. One more demonstration will be conducted in a 1.5 acre holding where women would manage the farm. Training in entrepreneurship development will be organized and farmers will be educated on the concept of group farming.