Research Into Use

Tackling fish losses along the marketing chain

Three new tools are helping to show the extent of fish losses which occur between fisher and consumer and where and how they happen. Knowing the size and nature of these losses is the first step towards preventing them. It's an important problem to tackle, not only because millions of fishers, processors and traders make a living from fish but also because many fisheries around the world are threatened.

Practical tools to assess and reduce fish losses

Based on rapid and participatory rural appraisal, *Informal Fish Loss Assessment* is a practical way for field workers to identify where fish losses occur along the market chain and who is affected. Once these are identified, field workers can add up the losses using another tool, *Load Tracking*. They can then use the *Questionnaire Loss Adjustment Method* in fishing communities or along fish market chains to discover why they happen.

FISHLOSS is a database that holds all this information. Planners and policy makers can analyse data in *FISHLOSS* using the *Post-Harvest Fish Loss Model*. The analyses help them understand the effect that different actions might have on reducing fish losses.

Growing demand

Proven in West Africa, the free tools are already being used by diverse teams in different fisheries across Africa and have also worked well in India and the Philippines.

Photo: J. Sanchez

Photo: S. Mann

The following examples show the growing demand for these practical tools in all kinds of organisations, from village cooperatives to government departments and international agencies. With the right kinds of tools in their hands, different teams have formed fruitful relationships.

Tackling fish losses in African inland and coastal fisheries

In Ghana, a wide variety of organisations have taken up and fine-tuned the tools. Working with the Keta District Assembly, for example, Ghana's Directorate of Fisheries, its Food Research Institute, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the non-government organisation KISMET, have used them to assess fish losses in communities in the Keta District. The University is also testing whether the load-tracking tool can be used to tackle losses in other produce – like vegetables and cereals.

In **Tanzania**, the Fisheries Division has adapted the tools for use by the Mwanza and Musoma Municipal Councils. And, on the **Ivory Coast**, the marine artisanal section of the Centre for Oceanographic Research, Abidjan, and the University of Cocody have used the tools to fight losses in marine fishing communities near Abidjan and in the Chicago smoked fish wholesale market.

Following a successful trial in **Nigeria**, the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research has budgeted for a programme to assess fish losses. And, in fishing villages around the important Lake Chad inland fishery, businesses, non-government organisations, and the Tedak Fishermen's Cooperative have used the tools to assess fish losses in wholesale markets for smoked fish.

Similarly, in **Senegal**, the national Institut de Technologie Alimentaire, the fishermen's' cooperative Collectif National des Pêcheurs du Sénégal and a non-government organisation got together to assess losses of fresh-caught sardines between Mbour, a coastal town, and Dakar.

FAO champions the tools

The FAO Fisheries Department has played a key role in promoting and using these new tools. Working with national researchers in West Africa they generated baseline data on fish losses in order to measure the impact of actions to reduce losses. They showed just how significant post-harvest fish losses are, and improved their ability to identify and prevent most causes of fish loss.

Impressed with the practical application of the tools, FAO published English and French versions of a manual for assessing post-harvest fisheries losses in West Africa. This manual is helping the FAO Fish Marketing and Utilization Service to strengthen capacity in thirteen African countries, Cameroon, Chad, the Gambia, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda, with a view to implementing measures to reduce fish losses in six of these countries.

For more information

For further technical information go to the RIU online database at **www.researchintouse.com/database** and type in **PHF08** or email **riuinfo@nrint.co.uk**

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