

Innovative fish sale improved livelihoods at Jurala dam in Telangana, India

Laxmappa Boini*¹, Ravinder Rao Bakhsi²

1. Assistant Director of Fisheries, Department of Fisheries, Nagarkurnool - 509209, Telangana, India.
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology, Dr. BRR Govt. College, Jadcherla - 509301, Mahabubnagar District, Telangana, India. Corresponding email: laxmappaboini@gmail.com.



Fishing in Jurala dam.

Serving fresh and delicious fish dishes to tourists is an enterprising activity of fisher families dwelling in the vicinity of Priyadarshini Jurala Project (PJP), Mahabubnagar District, Telangana State, India.

About 200 families of Nandimalla Village used to depend on agriculture for a living. These families lost their livelihoods when their land was submerged by construction of the Jurala Project reservoir in 1995. Members of these families now living nearby the dam have adapted to challenging circumstances to become innovative fishing industry entrepreneurs.

An innovative practice

Priyadarshini Jurala Irrigation project was constructed across the Krishna River, situated in Mahabubnagar District of Telangana State, India, and now its limits come under the

newly formed districts of Jogulamba Gadwal and Wanaparthy. The submerged Nandimalla Village land is within the limits of Wanaparthy District. The dwellers of this village understood the local demand for fresh fish and fish cuisine, and the entrepreneurs among them initiated the practice of serving the same to tourists. The villagers catch fish from the reservoir and keep them live in metal-framed cages placed in shallow waters of the reservoir until they are sold out. Over 400 people are directly or indirectly self-employed through these practices.

Marketing live fish

Nandimalla Village is somewhat unusual from other fish markets in that local fishers sell their catch live. Fish are captured with the help of suitable variety of nets and stocked in cages placed in shallow waters of the reservoir. It is quite

interesting to observe that they not only design but construct the cages locally by welding metal bars together. A small window like opening is left to drop and to collect the fish. Finally, the cage is covered on all sides by thick nylon nets to prevent the escape of fish. The total cost of each cage comes to about of ₹2,000 (US\$25). Each cage can store about 100 kg of fish and can be used for 8-10 years. The cages permit live fish to be kept for at least for 3-5 days until sold. Tourists/visitors and the people of surrounding villages prefer buying live fish, as there is no spoilage and deterioration of flesh, compared to dead products typically sold in other markets of the area.

Most tilapia sold live

Tilapia is exotic to India but is hardy and tolerant of adverse aquatic conditions. When compared to carps and other edible varieties of fishes, the availability of tilapia is relatively good in most inland waters. In aquaculture practices tilapia is often considered as a weed species. But some innovators such as the Nandimalla fishers are benefiting by capturing and storing live tilapia for use in fresh fish dishes for the tourist trade. Tilapia are easy to dress and prepare boneless fillets from. Fish can be trenced with knife directly from the surface and fried. It is cheap to source and because of its small size, more fish can be stored in a given area.



A view of Jurala dam.



Locally designed cages for live fish storage.



Observation of fish condition in cages at dam shore.

Cooking fish cuisine

Every day some of the tourists visiting the reservoir buy fish to take home for cooking. A good number of the people visit the places where the local fishers cook fresh fish on demand. This practice of the local fishers has attracted people not only from all over the district but also from Hyderabad and other towns and is generating good income for the local fishers.

Uplifted livelihoods

Earlier one fisher on average used to capture 10-15 kg fish per day and was selling it @ ₹40 (US\$0.50) per kg to a middleman who carries the same to urban markets for sale. In this practice the fisher was getting an income of ₹400 to ₹600 (US\$5 to \$7.50) only. But now the same fisher with the help of his family members is selling the live fish at the cost of ₹100 per kg and getting ₹1,000 to ₹1,500 income (US\$12.50 to \$18.75). Use of cages permits a continuous source of live fish to be maintained to attract consumers regularly.

Early success of the new practice of live fish sales and value-added fish products attracted the other residents of Nandimalla Village towards this business. This new trend encouraged local small-scale merchants to sell the items needed for cooking. It can be concluded that, live fish sale and value addition of fish food may pave the way for new entrepreneurs to start similar practices in other places where fishers still receive little money for their effort.



Consumers congregating to buy fish.



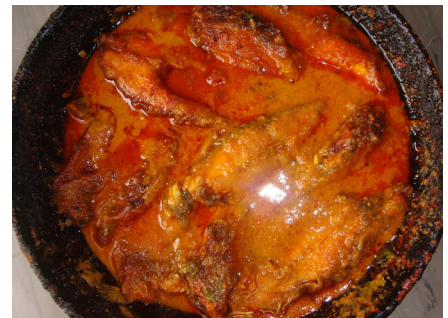
Wild-caught tilapia.



Tilapia cutlets.



Tilapia cutlets fried with spices.



Tilapia curry.

Tents at dam site for preparation of fish dishes.

