

FISHERIES

CONSUMPTION OF FISH

Present production is insufficient to meet the demand for fish in the country. Consumers, therefore, attempt to meet their requirements by purchasing imported dried fish, tinned fish etc. Import controls imposed on dried fish and tinned fish in the past years brought about unprecedented consequences and resulted in higher prices for all varieties of fish, including dried and tinned fish. This position of fish in the market has adversely affected the sale of meat despite the fact that meat is being consumed by a fewer number of people. The average price of a pound of fish in the open market in Colombo was Rs. 4/80 in 1975. This price had, however, shot up to Rs. 9/88 by June 1978. The average price of a pound of fish has increased by Rs. 5/08 during these four years. The average cost of production of a pound of fish in 1975 was Rs. 1/81 and this went up to Rs. 2/89 in 1978, reflecting an average increase of Rs. 1/08 (59.7%) in the cost of production during this period. The recent increase in price of petroleum could be one of the reasons for this increased cost of production besides the higher prices of machinery, spare-parts and nylon nets. The average price of a pound of dried fish in the open market in Colombo was Rs. 6.41 in 1975 and this however, went up to Rs. 12.24 in 1978, reflecting an increase of Rs. 5.83 (90.9%) during this period. This would substantiate the fact that the price of fish and dried fish has increased at a considerable rate.

The total annual production of fish has increased subject to fluctuations.

The production in 1978 reflects a progress of 17.6 percent over the figure for 1977. The fishing in the deep sea has not reflected a satisfactory progress. The majority of fishing is carried out only in shallow coastal areas in the sea utilizing traditional methods.

The majority of fish exports consist of fish with outershell such as lobsters, crabs etc. The quantity of fish exported and the foreign ex-

change earned have been increasing considerably. Compared with the figures in 1977, foreign exchange earnings and the quantity exported in 1978 have increased by Rs. 138.4 million and tons 1,256 respectively.

Domestic Production :		1978	1979
Dried Fish—Tons ..		6136	6461
Imports—Tons ..		13334.5	2981.5
		19420.5	9442.5

Year	Production (Tons)	Quantity increased (Tonnes)	Percentage
1975	127,106	18,154	16.16
1976	133,731	6,625	5.21
1977	136,581	2,850	2.13
1978	160,670	24,089	17.64

Though exports of fish have earned foreign exchange for the country they have also adversely affected the domestic market and the fisheries industry in general. There is a scarcity of lobsters in the domestic market and their prices are beyond the reach of local consumers.

Sri Lanka also imports dried fish, maldivian fish and tinned fish. The quantity imported gradually declined in the past years. The quantity imported in 1975 had been 15045.3 tons and the figure in 1978 went down to only 5,112.7 tons. The quantity imported in 1978 dropped by 22.1 percent compared with the figure in 1977. The foreign exchange spent on imports has also gradually declined despite the fact that the year 1978 reflects an increase due to the effect of the exchange rates. The price of a ton of dried fish in the foreign market has also increased annually. The average price paid for a ton of dried fish in 1977 was Rs. 3,866/- and this price increased to Rs. 6696/- in 1978. About 52.6 percent of the total foreign exchange allocated for imports in 1978 had been spent on dried fish. People in the lower income groups are accustomed to buying their provisions only once a week and therefore prefer to hurry and consume dried fish.

The table shows that the production of dried fish has fallen by 10,228 tons. This situation has influenced the prices in the dried fish market.

The domestic production of dried fish in 1977 was 7,443 tons while the figure for 1978 was 6,461 tons. (This is a decline of 13.2%). The importation of tinned fish which was abandoned during the past period has been resumed once again. Therefore, more foreign exchange will be spent for these imports despite restrictions on importation of dried fish. (Imports for January to July 1979 were 51681 tons valued at Rs. 52.3 million).

The supply of fish to the domestic market was gradually declining. The supply of fish had declined from 157,528 tons in 1975 to 142,665 tons in 1977. However, the supply increased to 164,393 tons in 1978. Yet, this is not a satisfactory situation when the supply is compared with the per capita consumption. The per capita consumption in 1975 was pounds 26.11 while the figure for 1978 stood at pounds 25.96. (The per capita consumption in 1975 was pounds 133 in Norway, pounds 122 in Japan, pounds 48 in Thailand). The Medical Research

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ANNUAL CONSUMPTION OF FISH

	Quantity in Tons			
	1975	1976	1977	1978
Population (Mn)	13.5	13.7	14.1	14.2
Local production of fresh fish ..	127,106	133,731	136,581	160,670
Imports*	31,820	15,716	9,143	7,895
Exports*	1,398	2,713	3,059	4,172
Local consumption	157,528	146,734	142,665	164,393
Per capita annual fish consumption (lbs.)	26.11	23.94	22.92	25.96

*Converted to fresh form

Source : Ministry of Fisheries

Fisheries

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Institute in Sri Lanka has recommended that the minimum consumption of fish should be 48 pounds per head.

The estimated production for 1978 was 183,600 tons while the actual production for the year had been only 160,670 tons. The difference between estimated production and real production was only 22,930 tons (12.5%). The estimated production for the first quarter in 1978 was tons 42,700 while the actual production during the period was 36,000 tons. The difference was 6700 (15.7%). The estimated production in the first quarter in 1979 was 41,400 tons while the actual production was only 39,347 tons. The difference was 2053 tons (4.96). The industry could not achieve estimated production due to both natural causes and technological defects inherent in the industry.