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Fish Marketing in Cameroon: A Case Study of Yaoundé Markets.

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Introduction and Background

Fish like most seafood is a very rich source of protein and plays an important role in food security as a source of food for millions of people Worldwide. In many developing countries like Cameroon, fish is mainly for direct human consumption. Generally, fish is consumed in all corners and parts of Cameroon as an important source of animal proteins in the diet of both rural and urban households indicating a good future for the fishing sector. But production is usually on small scale. According to DSCN 1997, estimated fish production in Cameroon stood to about 100,000 tons/yr. As a result of this low production, Cameroon highly relies on imported fish to meet the demand of its existing markets. What this entails is that excess production from other parts of the world is traded in Cameroon.

However, increased fish production has received far higher priority from development agencies than the handling, processing and marketing of the existing catch (UNIFEM, 1993 ; Arrington et al, 1994). Therefore, market studies for aquaculture and fish products in Cameroon are of importance because marketing is a vital function of any business as it may be disastrous to produce any commodity which could not be sold. Yaoundé the capital city of Cameroon where World Fish Program is currently coordinating an inter-center initiative aimed at sustainable management of the humid forest was highlighted as focus for this study. This study was based on the artisanal sector. The study highlight fish marketing situation in Cameroon, sources and prices of fish sold, the marketing channels and stakeholders working to promote fishing activities in the country.

Methodology

In the study, data were collected from sellers and producers. Interviews, discussions, observation and questionnaire were administered to both fresh and smoked/dried fish dealers in the markets that constitute Yaoundé city. But more emphasis was laid on fresh fish, which concentrated around Mvog-mbi and Mvog-ada markets. A representative sample was drawn from the fish marketing population. About 80 – 85% of fresh fish retailers in the market were interviewed. Data were also obtained from research documents and journals. The data collected was analysed using crossstabulation, regression and tables. These was done based on the objectives. The results obtained from the study were as followed:

Typology of Fish Market

There are six important markets that make up Yaoundé city where fish are sold. These markets are either located on the roadsides or on special places designed by the council. These markets are: Mvog-mbi, "Marché de femmes", Elig-edjoa, Etoudi, Mokolo, Mvog-ada (fanta citron) and Briqueterie. Two important aspects of these markets were looked into. These aspects are the geographical location and specialization of these different markets that characterized

consumption of fish in the town of Yaoundé (Table 1). These markets are located according to the density and importance of quarters or council areas in the town of Yaoundé. As concerns the commercialization of fresh water fish, the markets are situated around the agglomeration of strong propensity of consumption of animal (fish) protein. The markets of Mvog-mbi and Mvog-ada (fanta citron) are the two principal areas where fresh fish are sold. Fresh fish are of two categories: fresh life fish, which constitute mostly of life Catfish (*Siluriforms*) and fresh dead fish, which are “kanga” (*Heterotis niloticus*), tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) and “captain” (*Lates niloticus*). The fresh life fish are put in large steel pots for sale. They can last for about a week or more without feeding, with periodical change of stream water. While the fresh dead fish are place in piles according to their various sizes.

Table 1: Geographical Location and Specialization of Market

Name	Category	Administrative location	Type of fish sold
Mvog-mbi	Periphery market and central market	Yaoundé 5	Smoked/dried, fresh life and dead fish
"Marché de femmes"	Periphery market	Yaoundé 1	Smoked/dried fish.
Elig-edjoa,	Periphery market	Yaoundé 1	Smoked/dried fish.
Etoudi	Periphery market	Yaoundé 1	Smoked/dried fish.
Mokolo,	Periphery market	Yaoundé 2	Smoked/dried fish.
Mvog-ada (fanta citron)	Central market	Yaoundé 5	Fresh life fish.
Briqueterie	Central market	Yaoundé 2	Smoked/dried fish.

Source: Survey Data

Sources of Fish Sold in Yaoundé markets

The commercialization of the different types of fish sold in Yaoundé comes from different sources. Fresh life fish comes from the river Nyong in Akonolinga and it environ i.e Ayos, Mbalmayo etc... While the fresh dead fish comes from Tibati from the north of the country and Akonolinga (Nyong River). The smoked/dried fish comes from two principal ponds: the river pond/dam (lakes) of Lagdo in the Northern Region of Cameroon and Mappé in the Western Region of Cameroon.

The variability of the species commercialized is equally of prime important and significant. The species with their local names; “kanga” (*Heterotis niloticus*), tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*), carpe and catfish, constitute the stock of fish coming from the Nyong River.

The Market Actors

General there are many actors involve in the fishing activities in Cameroon. This is simply because in Cameroon fish markets are consider a free market. The market operates under laissez-faire policies in the sense that the government have no control in the marketing setup. The producer and wholesalers determine the cost of their fish and how it is sold to the consumers. Regardless the laissez-faire policies of the fish marketing sector, the government of Cameroon through the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Industry, research institutions and other Non Governmental Organisation’s notably World Fish Program are putting efforts to encourage production, protection and consumption both at the level of producers, consumers and marketing actors.

Cost and Price of Fish Sold in the Markets

Cost is simply the amount paid for the quantity of fish purchased by the retailers including the cost of transportation and other expenses incurred during the process of marketing. From the study analysis, it is observed that a kilogram of fresh life fish cost 1510 F CFA (2, 30 Euro).

Price is the amount that the retailer charges for his/her fish. It is therefore the ultimate expression of relationship between the buyer and seller. Price is very crucial in any marketing system. It determines the success or failure of all marketing agents. Price is based on the cost of fish bought by the retailer. Sizes of fish play a very important role in costing and pricing in fish marketing. The average price per kilogram (Catfish) in the markets as shown in the table above is 1855 F CFA (2, 83 Euro*) (Table 2).

Table 2: Estimated Prices for Fresh Life Catfish in Mvog-mbi and Mvog-ada Markets.

Type of fish / size	Price (F CFA) per kg in Mvog-mbi Market	Price (F CFA) per kg in Mvog-ada Market	Average Price (F CFA) in the two Markets
Catfish			
• Large	• 2420	• 2360	• 2390
• Average	• 1930	• 1920	• 1925
• Small	• 1235	• 1265	• 1250
• Average	• 1860	• 1850	• 1855

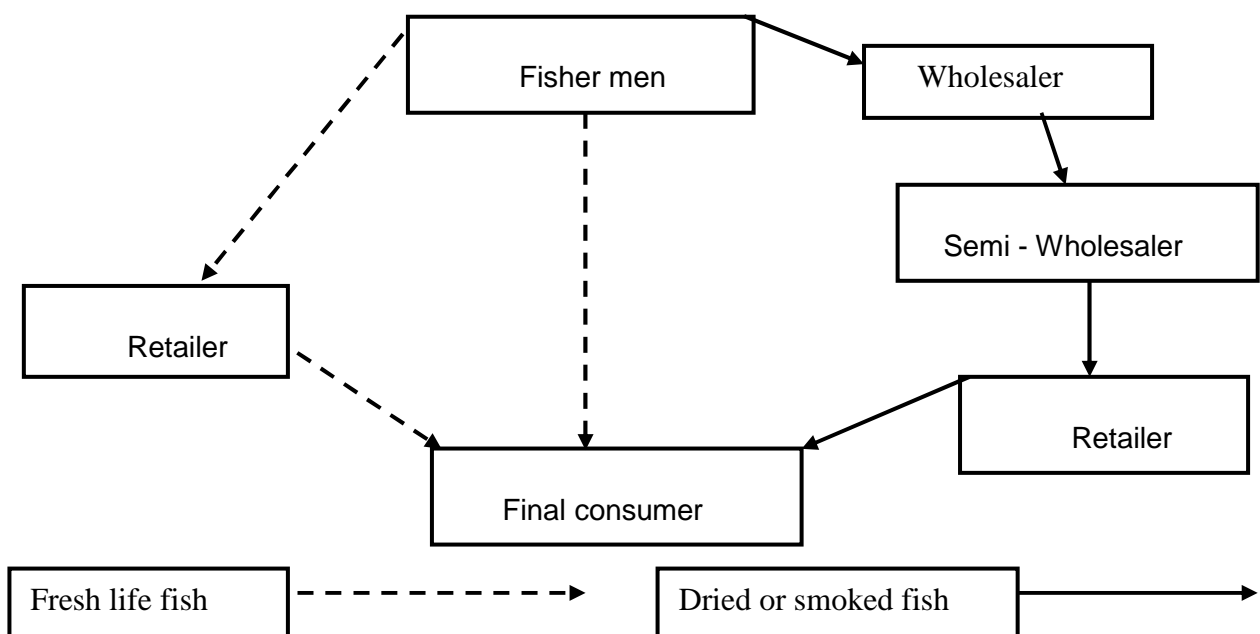
Source: Survey data

1 euro* ~655 F CFA

Fish Marketing Chain and Distribution Channel

Generally, the flow of goods between the raw material stage and ultimate consumption is called distribution and the route followed is usually called a distribution channel (Leighton, 1966). The concept of distribution channels in fish marketing differs at each stage along the way. Hence, the concept of what comprises distribution channels depends on the position and nature of the viewer. Further more, within any set of distribution channels, a seller must decide whether to sell to one or more customers. Distribution seldom stops with the sale to the immediate customer; it must be considered as an ongoing flow, with the immediate customer in many cases being only a temporary step along the way. The chain of distribution of fresh fish is relatively short as compared to other products due to the nature of the product and the conservation methods (CEPID, 1997).

Figure 1: Diagram showing Fish Marketing Chain and Distribution Channel



Source: Author

Conclusion and Recommendation

The importance of fish cannot be over emphasised because of its role as a rich protein source and income generation for rural households. Artisanal fishes which today are under the threat of extinction due to many reasons; abandonment of the sector by the state to the local fishing communities leading to over exploitation and unsustainable management of indigenous species. This therefore implies that, research institutions and development organisations-most especially those which have carried or are today carrying out research on fishes, have to make results available to the local and regional communities as well as, sensitize them on the advantages of consuming, producing and preserving indigenous fish species.

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