

ABSTRACT

A very delicious and nutritious but highly perishable after harvesting, is the fish. It is also said that, the fishes are not the potatoes because their journey from farm-to-fork is very crucial and involves value addition at each and every stage of supply chain in order to retain its physical form and nutrient composition. Post-harvest losses are of great concern when reviving the fish and aquaculture sector of the country. The improper post-harvest handling and dissemination of fish prior to its consumption, pose a serious threat towards the food security and the fishing sector's sustainability. Therefore, this study attempts to identify the risk factors which are liable for post-harvest losses in supply chain of fish. Also, to suggest the alleviation techniques to conserve the aqua resources of country. The study employs qualitative research methodology and risk assessment matrix to prioritize the risk factors which were identified through literature review. Experts of supply chain of fish in the study area were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis was performed. The risk assessment matrix was then distributed to all the experts for prioritization of risks. Improper handling during sorting, auction and loading in transport, exposure of fishes to the high temperature, long storage time, poor condition of auction halls, bacterial infestation during storage and inadequate chilling methods in transport were given high rating by the experts. These risks are considered as a major hazard to the product's health and sustainability of the sector. It was found during the observation that an unhealthy and worst quality fish was promoted with low prices to attract the buyers due to poor purchasing power of poor communities. Apparently, it became an urgent need to draw the focus of problem towards the policy makers and institutional heads so that they can take stern actions against these circumstances in order to maintain food security and improve the livelihood of marginalized communities. Lastly, recommendations such as fisheries policy upgradation, quality control and enhancement measures, fish supply chain optimization procedures starting from harvesting, packaging, storage, transportation and sale of the product are provided in accordance with global best practices to reduce the losses and maintain the food security which is very challenging for developing countries.

Key words: Identifying, Inland Fish Industry, Mitigating Measures, Post-harvest Losses, Risk Factors, Supply Chain