

Research Article

Impact of Participation of Youth in Aquaculture in India

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ABSTRACT

Aquaculture which deals mainly with the farming of fish has great potential and benefits that range from its nutritional purpose to economic benefits, contribution to food security, employment, and income generation. As the natural fish stock declines due to overexploitation, aquaculture has experienced spectacular growth in Nigeria recently. Despite this growth in the sector, fish supply is yet to meet the demand, i.e., as fish demand increases with increase in population, there is no sufficient increase in supply to meet up with the demand. This shows that more attention needs to be paid to this sector in terms of grants permission, improved technologies, orientation programs, and also importantly, human resources for the sector to reach its maximum potential. However, it has been observed that youth involved in aquaculture are few, even as the rate of unemployment keeps increasing. This is as a result of some factors limiting their participation in the sector. To increase the involvement of the youth in the sector, some effective measures such as provision of loan scheme for graduates and school leavers, development of participatory programs, and effective extension work need to be adopted. The participation of the youth in aquaculture will not only helps the sector to reach its full potential but also contributes to the reduction of unemployment among the youth in India, as there are opportunities in the sector waiting to be tapped.

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INTRODUCTION



Aquaculture is one of the fastest growing subsectors of agriculture with huge potential. It occurs in inland and only recently has the coastal region been the focus of development. The recent popularity of aquaculture in the country is as a result of a decline in the natural stock. As the human population increases and consequent protein demands, the overexploitation of the natural fish resources has made aquaculture a major option to combat protein malnutrition in India. Considering the fact that India has a large suitable land for fish culture, the potential of the aquaculture sector to meet the fish demand of the increasing population cannot be questioned and overemphasized. For the potential of this sector to be maximized, there must be a

significant increase in the involvement of personnel in every area of the sector.

In India, aquaculture is still carried out using some physical strength, which declines with age. The youths have desirable qualities that can promote all the subsectors of agriculture, but most of them have strong apathy toward it. Youth amounts to about 80 million, representing about 60% of the total population of the country. This statistics shows that the youth dominates the country in terms of population. At present, it has been observed that the number of youth involved in aquaculture is very small. Rather than getting involved in farming activities, a vast population of the youth goes in search of the white-collar jobs in which a decline in its availability has been the experience in recent times. For aquaculture to reach its full potential, there should be a considerable and active participation of a high percentage of the youth in the sector. Therefore, this paper aims to evaluate the factors limiting the participation of youth in the aquaculture sector, the ways to improve the participation of the youth in the sector, and the potential contribution of aquaculture in the reduction of unemployment among youth.

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FACTORS LIMITING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN AQUACULTURE

The involvement of the youths in the aquaculture sector is still low, and some factors are responsible for this.



The factors include:

Expertise

As aquaculture involves the rearing of aquatic organism (fish) in a confined environment, some technicalities are involved in the successful culture of the organisms. Many of the youths lack the skill and knowledge necessary on the field. Even the graduates of the field do not have the practical knowledge, as there may be a limit to what can be known in the four corners of the classroom.

Capital investment

Every business sector requires a capital investment, and aquaculture sector is not an exception. The high cost of fish feed plays a big part in the requirement of substantial capital to practice aquaculture. Based on this, most youths find it difficult to raise the funds needed to start even when the interest is there.

Preference for the White-collar jobs

Ever since the discovery of oil in the country, attention was shifted from agriculture and the subsectors as a major source of revenue for the country to oil sector. As a result of this, agriculture started losing its popularity gradually among the youths from one generation to another. The younger generation prefers the “neat” white-collar job with the attractive working environment to farming. Therefore, we now have more of the aged ones involved in all types of farming activities including fish farming and this could be a serious threat to the food security of the country.

Incentives

The amount paid/given to workers of fish farms as wages or salaries is not encouraging enough to make it lucrative to the youths. Therefore, majority of them see farm jobs as a symbol of poverty.

Lack of encouragement from the government

A large number of farms have failed to attain profitability level in one or more year due to disruptions in

their production process. The farmers are not encouraged by the government due to lack of stable financial policies to help the farmers, effective trainings, and supply of facilities at subsidized rate among others. All these have not really made the sector appealing to the youths, thereby still making it difficult to bridge the gap between the fish supply and demand of the country. In order for youth programs in this sector to be successful, government support is very important.

WAYS TO IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF THE YOUTH

Entrepreneurship development

Less attention is paid on the entrepreneurship development of the students in our institutions which is seriously telling on the entrepreneurial skills of the eventual graduates. To create the mindset of being enterprising in the youth early enough, entrepreneurship development should be added to the schools’ course curriculum. As this will help, especially students of aquaculture management to have an awareness of the benefits embedded in their field of study.

Government help

Government should help in the provision of credit scheme for the few youths engaged in aquaculture, as this will encourage others to participate in the sector and also increase the production of the few who are already in it.

Agricultural production

An agricultural production loan scheme aligned with monitoring activities can also be set up for the graduates and school leavers. As the decline in the rate of employment has reached such an alarming proportion, this will give them the opportunity and empowerment to participate in agricultural production in which aquaculture is also a major subsector and their activities will be effectively monitored. Aquaculture has the capacity to serve as a veritable tool for the reduction of unemployment in the country.

Agricultural development programs

Development of aquaculture participatory program can also go a long way in encouraging the youth through trainings, provision of infrastructure, inputs, and effective extension works. The programs should be aimed at boosting fish production and youth participation.

An example is the “Youth - in - Agriculture” program introduced by the Ondo State Government in Nigeria in 2004.

AQUACULTURE AS A TOOL FOR THE REDUCTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Agricultural Industry reported that the youth represents 60% of the total population of the country as earlier stated. Of this 60%, a large fraction of about 54.1% is unemployed while just about 5.9% are gainfully employed. This has led most youths into cultism, prostitution, and street begging,

among others. To reduce the level of unemployment in the country, areas which possess the high potential of employment opportunities must be looked into and developed. A good example of such is the aquaculture sector.

Fish remains a major source of protein in human diet. According to FDF, there is still a short in supply of about 1.9 million MT in which aquaculture has the capability to meet if more participants are injected into the sector. This shows the big opportunity waiting to be explored by the youth participation in the aquaculture sector. Different units and channels make up the aquaculture sector, thereby giving the opportunity to function in different areas within the sector which will in turn contribute to the development of the sector and also reduce unemployment among youths.

SOME OF THE AREAS IN THE AQUACULTURE SECTOR THAT CAN BE EXPLORED BY THE YOUTHS INCLUDE

Fish Feed suppliers

Fish feed is a major factor in aquaculture as the quality of fish feeds affects fish production. There is an opportunity in the supply of feed ingredients to feed mills and also the supply of the packaged feeds to fish farms.

Fish processing

Youths can also be involved in the area of value additions and the marketing of the products.

Consultancy

Those with practical knowledge and skills can serve as consultants to other fish farms.

Fish farmers

Youth may decide to practice fish farming by going into the production aspect. This will create a source of income and also contribute to the supply of fish to meet the protein demand of the surrounding communities.

Fish marketers (Wholesalers and Retailers)

Youths can be involved in the distribution channel from the wholesalers to the retailers till it finally gets to the consumers.

Inputs supplier

Some can function as suppliers of all inputs needed by the farmer for effective fish production. for example, fish seeds.

CONCLUSION

The potential of aquaculture in the country cannot be overlooked. As the rate of unemployment keeps growing and thereby leads to high crime rate and other social vices among the youth, there is a need to improve the participation of the youth in sectors with high opportunities such as the aquaculture sector. The participation will not only reduce the rate of unemployment but also enable aquaculture sector to reach its full potential, thereby contributing to the food security and economic development of the nation.

Recommendation

To improve participation of youth in the aquaculture sector, more attention should be paid to this sector by the government as this will encourage the youth to show interest in the sector. Orientation changing programs should be organized to change the mindset of seeing farming activities as a symbol of poverty but as a viable income generating enterprise.

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