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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Report on the Class-One Standard Training in Moree and Elmina



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THE
UNIVERSITY
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Cover photo: Fish processors smoking fish with Ahotor oven (Credit: CEWEFIA)

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SNV: <http://www.snvworld.org/en/countries/ghana>

ACRONYMS

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| CCM | Centre for Coastal Management |
| CEWEFIA | Central and Western Region Fishmongers Improvement Association |
| CRC | Coastal Resource Center |
| CSLP | Coastal Sustainable Landscape Project |
| DAA | Development Action Association |
| DFAS | Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Science |
| DMFS | Department of Marine Fisheries Sciences |
| DQF | Daasgift Quality Foundation |
| FtF | Feed the Future |
| GIFA | Ghana Inshore Fishermen's Association |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |
| GNCFC | Ghana National Canoe Fishermen's Council |
| HM | Hen Mpoano |
| ICFG | Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Governance |
| MESTI | Ministry of Environment Science and Technology |
| MOFAD | Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development |
| NDPC | National Development Planning Commission |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| SFMP | Sustainable Fisheries Management Project |
| SMEs | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| SNV | Netherlands Development Organization |
| SSG | SSG Advisors |
| STWG | Scientific and Technical Working Group |
| UCC | University of Cape Coast |
| URI | University of Rhode Island |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WARFP | West Africa Regional Fisheries Development Program |

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fish processors from Moree and Elmina were involved in a one-day training held at the CEWEFIA Fish Processing and Training Center on 21st November 2019. The participants were 15 females. The training was facilitated by Mr. Kwame Damoah of Fisheries Commission and staff of CEWEFIA. The first session was used in discussing the class one certification and requirements. Discussions on registration with district assemblies and health certificates were carried out in this session. The second session was used to discuss the various steps in fish processing and the sanitary aspects of each stage. The third sessions was used to discuss proper and improper packaging of fish and fish products. The final session discussed the use of insecticides and pesticides by fish processors in their kitchens and the sale of fish to the various markets. The best pesticides and their use were discussed by the fish processors. Some issues were also identified during the training and the participants together with the facilitators made recommendations on how best to tackle the issues.

1. BACKGROUND

The production of fish and fish products is rife with activities that promote contamination and cross-contamination in the fish processing environment. Preventing microbes in wet areas from migrating to dry areas in a fish processing shed, preventing fish processors from contaminating fish with viruses that emanates from their bodies and ensuring a safe and healthy environment for fish processing is among the main aims of conducting a training on class one standard to ensure that fish processors produce safe and healthy fish under hygienic conditions.

Class-one standard was instituted to ensure that fish processors comply with standards that would ensure safe fish and healthy fish processors. The criteria and requirements instituted by the Fisheries Commission of Ghana, the Food and Drugs authority as well as the sustainable fisheries management project (SFMP) are easy for any fish processor to follow to ensure they are certified to produce healthy fish for consumption. It is envisaged that class-one would ensure better markets for the fish and fish products the respective fish processors involved in the audit.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of the training were to strengthen processors knowledge in;

- Healthy handling of fish and personal hygiene.
- Requirements for obtaining class-one.
- Enhancing processing kitchens to meet class-one.
- Processing fish in healthy environments and under healthy conditions.

1.2 Training Outcomes

It is expected that after the training;

- Fish processors kitchens would be developed based on the knowledge gained in the Class-one training.
- Fish processors knowledge in certification would be enhanced to create enabling environment for credit accessibility and acceptance by local government institutions.
- Fish processors capacities in healthy fish handling would be enhanced.
- Fish processors acceptance into the class-one scheme would be strengthened.

2. OUTCOMES

The training held on the 21st of November 2019, was attended by fifteen (15) participants all female; two (2) from Moree and thirteen (13) from five suburbs in Elmina. The training was facilitated by CEWEFIA and a staff of the Fisheries Commission.

The facilitators prepared the participants for the sessions by asking the following questions

- What is class-one?
- Who was/were involved in putting the class-one standards together?
- What are the indications that prove that class one is being observed by a fish processor?
- What does a class-one kitchen look like?

2.1 Session One

The participants were taken through the various registrations they should partake for the requisite certificates and the importance of owning such certificates. They were advised to register with the District Assembly to make them visible in the district and also credit worthy. The participants were also advised to register for health certificates after the necessary medical examinations have been conducted on them. In the discussion, a participant commented that when she went for the medical examination, she was diagnosed with Typhoid which she was not aware of as she never felt sick.

Participants were taken through a discussion on the health hazards they faced in their fish processing and how they could contaminate their products by not taking the necessary precautions.



Figure 1. The Facilitator from FC, Mr. Kwame Damoah, discussing fish health with participants

2.2 Session Two: Fish processing

What to consider in buying fresh fish for processing, and how the kitchen or processing area should look before the processing activity starts. This started a discussion on hygiene and safety practice observation in the kitchen before fish is introduced into the kitchen.

The participants commented that fresh fish when smoked gives better income than fish that had already gone bad. They explained that the Ahotor oven makes fresh fish look good when smoked and bad fish the opposite, and so they preferred fresh fish to the bad when they go to the market for better income.

After this session a participant (Diana Anyomi from Elmina) commented that, ‘she had learnt that her kitchen should have 2 entries. One for porters of fish and the other for carting packaged fish. We now understand why we should avoid cross contamination of the processing area’.



Figure 2. A participant from Moree, Diana Otuteye, asking a question on fish packaging

2.3 Session Three: Packaging

On packaging the participants were divided on the packaging materials they used since they do not attend the same market centers for their products. The processors who send their fish to the Volta region all agreed that they use cement papers to package their fish. Though, they agreed that it is not wholesome for them as well as the consumer.



Figure 3. The facilitator from CEWEFIA, Josephine O. Addo explaining hygiene and safety in the processing kitchen

2.4 Final Session Storage and selling

In this session the storage of fish, treatment of infested fish and the use of pesticides in the processing kitchens were discussed.

The participants were advised to desist from pouring substances into the washing area of fish in their kitchens since this could contaminate their fish during washing and cleaning for processing.

They were advised to use natural substances like the Neem tree in preserving fish other than using insecticides and pesticides which could cause contamination and poisoning when they fall directly onto the fish.

A discussion on the sale of fish produced from the Ahotor oven ensued, and the participants commented that they always sold the fish from the Ahotor oven before selling the ones smoked on the chorkor ovens. They all agreed that, one Ahotor oven is not enough for them so they would want to get better incomes from the sale of the Ahotor oven fish to help them build additional Ahotor ovens. The participants were also advised to build a network of fish processors for class one to ensure that heavy orders from the various markets can be taken care of.

2.5 Issues

The use of used cement paper is still in use. The participants explained that, brown paper is not easily available and the ones that are available which is even not food-grade is expensive and even inaccessible in some communities. This raised a discussion that in some markets the market queens had banned the use of cement paper in packaging, so, the use of cement paper could be banned all over Ghana. On fish health, an issue was raised about how tricycle drivers treat the fish in pans that they are supposed to send to the processing kitchens. Some of them do not pack the pans well thereby allowing the fish to drop in the cabin of the truck. The labor boys also in helping to pack the fish sometimes step on the fish thereby making them unwholesome.

3. MAJOR CHALLENGE

Fish is in season, so some processors were not able to attend the training.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Cement paper

Market queens across Ghana should be trained on the hazards of using used cement papers in packaging smoked fish.

Brown paper companies should be sensitized to produce for fish processors at reduced prices and also to set their retail shops all across the coastal communities

Fish health

Tricycle drivers should be trained on healthy handling of fish basins. The women implored FC and CEWEFIA to work together in doing that.

Fish processors should cover fresh fish with cloth before packing into the tricycles to avoid contamination from the trucks.

The additional financial support to make this activity complete would later be given to the participants in the form of renovation to their processing kitchens.