REPORT ON WORKSHOP TO VALIDATE A SURVEY CONDUCTED AT DZEMENI, VOLTA REGION

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Introduction

A one-day validation meeting was held at the Town Hall at Dzemeni in the Volta Region on Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 10:00 am. The purpose of the validation meeting was to cross-check if the findings of the GRFLAM study are accurate and reflect the real situation on the ground. It also provided an opportunity to discuss and validate outcomes of the study to address any gap and to take in account the feedback provided during the report writing. The process of validating a study is important to ensure ownership of the outcomes by the stakeholders involved, thus their support to and involvement in the implementation of the recommendations formulated.

The studies were conducted under the GRFLAM-FAO Project and was led by Dr. Esther Wahaga, Senior Research Scientist of the CSIR-Food Research Institute. Other members who were involved in the studies were Dr. James Ledo, Research Scientist and Mr. Jeremiah Lartey-Brown, Technologist at the CSIR-Food Research Institute.

The workshop was attended by thirty-five (35) participants consisting of representatives of the Fisheries Commission, the District Assembly, Fishers, Fish processors, Traders, and religious leaders. Fifteen (15) female participants were present. To ensure equal engagement with both male and female participants, presentations were done with both male and female participants together. After the engagement with all the participants, male participants were discharged leaving behind female participants. Female participants were then given the chance to ask any question they had for further clarification.

Opening

The workshop commenced at 9:30 am with an opening prayer by the Hon. Assembly man of the district, Dr. Wahaga reiterated the purpose of the meeting and went ahead to make a power-point presentation of the findings of the reports.

The Opening of the meeting

Gender-Responsive Methodology for Fish Loss Assessment for African Small-Scale Fisheries

This presentation covered gender and fish loss, inadequate technology, fish loss in small-scale fisheries and gender inequalities. According to Dr. Wahaga, the objectives of the study were to determine the best ways of reducing fish loss along the Value Chain with a gender lens; to highlight the need to address gender issues that contribute to fish loss in small scale fisheries; and to find solutions to gender-based challenges of Small-Scale fisheries to reduce fish loss.

Presenting the results, she informed participants that two types of fish loss were identified during the survey; quality loss which occurred when there are changes in the outlook, taste,

firmness, and wholesomeness of fish; and Physical loss which occurred when there are changes in the physical value, weight, and wholesomeness in fish. She indicated that fish loss occurred at production, processing and marketing stages in the value chain and highlighted some of the causes of the loss at each of the stages.

At the processing stage, she indicated that there is fish loss because of unhygienic environmental practices and landing beach were sub-standard posing more danger to the hygiene of fish which can fasten the process of deterioration. Another contributing factor to fish loss were the unavailability of cold storage facilities and processors waiting for a longer periods to aggregate fish, resulting in qualitative loss.

On coping strategies to reduce fish loss, she indicated the need to reduce fish processing during the bumper harvest, continued smoking, padding baskets to prevent breakages during transporting, salting, fermentation, combination of traditional and modern technology in processing fish and re-intervention of NORAD FTT stove to fit the needs of processors.

The participants asked series of questions and concerns on the result which were addressed by Dr. Wahaga. Male participants mostly asked questions for further clarification and to state their joy that the study had captured the exact situation of fish, fish loss and gender-based constraints in the community.

Analysis of Gender-Based and Other Constraints Along the Fish Value Chain

Mr. Jeremiah Lartey-Brown, Principal Technologist with the assistance of Dr. Wahaga made the presentation on analysis of gender-based and other constraints along the fish value chain. In his presentation, he indicated that gender played an important role in the socio-economic framework of a society. The constant interaction between fishers and fish processors, results in gender-based constraints. The study identified constraints in the production, processing, and marketing stages in the fish value chain. Some of the constraints in the production stages which the study identified are that decision making power lied with men and these are usually a disadvantage to the female gender. At the processing stage, multiple task and work burden leads to time poverty because 80% of women are at childbearing age. As a result of the struggles women go through, they end up being constrained in many ways. She indicated that the study found that women are strained due to depletion of natural wood resources, as they

must use more time in searching for barely non-existent wood resources. Other constraints included access to transportation to cart fish; limited access to transportation; inadequate,

training support: technology such as FTT stove too expensive; inadequate cold storage facilities were identified as some of the gender-based constraint. With regards to constraints at the marketing stage, the study identified work burden and time poverty; limited mobility, transportation, bad roads to transport fish, inability of women to work extra hours at local levels because they have their specific roles; and lack of ready market linkages; low literacy among women, etc. The study identified access and control over productive resources and decision-making power. The study noted that access and control over resources lies with men especially at the household level whilst women have control over their own resources. Again, women have no control over public resources but rather have control and decision-making power over group resources. There is also lengthy aggregation and inadequate handling, packaging, and storage. The workshop discussions showed that participants agreed to all the issues as gender-based constraints along the fish value chain.

A cross section of the participants

Recommendations and Solutions for Addressing the Gender-Based Constraints to Reduce Losses

In another presentation on the above topic, Dr. Wahaga presented the following as recommendations and solutions for addressing gender-based constraints to reduce fish loss:

She indicated that the reduction in the work burden by using appropriate technologies in processing fish can go a long way to reduce fish loss. Also, improved labour and time saving techniques; the use of low cost powered refrigeration, solar powered drying techniques and effective packaging techniques were some of the solutions mentioned.

Other solutions included the use of improved technology, improved processing techniques to reduce time spent on cutting and descaling of fish and the development of an improved and low-cost version of the FTT stove.

Monitoring and evaluation of transferred technologies to ensure wide coverage and training programs. Thus, engaging men and women at the same level in training, decision making and control over productive resources.

Other interventions to address gender-based constraints to reducing losses identified in the study were equipping actors with hygienic practices, improve mobility, create market linkages, investment in research, creating financial linkages, introduction of new technologies augmented with effective advisory services, etc.

A cross section of participant

Discussions, Comments, and Suggestions

Participants agreed that during the bumper season, women processors are overburdened with work since they process large quantities of fish to avoid fish loss. Processors also doubled as traders. Participants appealed for cold storage facilities to help cut down on fish loss.

Participants were concerned with aquaculture in the area because of the impact of fish feed on capture fish. Participants believed that the feed prevented capture fish from reproducing thus reducing the quantity of capture fish in the study area. It is believed in the study area that the feed makes all cage fish infertile thus they are not able to reproduce while in the cages. The representative of the Fisheries commission indicated that, fingerlings are usually male and that it was not the fish that turned them into male or infertile. The team felt that fishers and fisher folk need to be educated in aquaculture to cut down on such perceptions. Though this was not part of the results presented to participants, they felt that with the kind of results presented to them, the team could find a solution to the problem of the feed turning fingerlings to males or making them infertile, thus impacting on capture fish.

Another issue of concern to the fishers was the frequent breakdown of out-board motors during fishing, which can cause fish loss because they may delay in landing as a result. Participants therefore reiterated that, the team should stress in their report that there is the need for fishers to be assisted with low interest loans or interest free loans to help fishers purchase new and modern out-board motors.

The meeting also discussed the issue of sanitation along the landing sites and pollution in the river. This was an interesting discussion, between the participants. Participants felt that it was they themselves who should deal with their own sanitation issues. The team indicated that, it was for that reason that the assembly men were involved from the inception of the study. Participants agreed that they should continue to work among themselves to improve sanitary conditions along the landing sites. The assembly man mentioned that, during the data collection stage of the study, the team had discussed sanitation along the beach and that, he together with his colleague Assembly Man had started working on improving sanitary conditions along the landing beach and would continue to work on improving sanitation along the landing beach. After the meeting, the team visited the landing beach and confirmed that sanitary conditions along the landing beach was much better than it was in April 2022. Though much needs to be done. Participants felt that they should not wait for 'outsiders' to point to them sanitation issues in their community and so it was the right time for them to take charge. In the same vein, participants felt that issues of pollution of the river (which resulted in fish kills), should be tackled by the community itself. In all this, the team still feels that community members should be encouraged in this direction to improve sanitation in fishing communities.

Participants were happy that the team had returned to share the findings of the study with them, and it was the first of its kind. Participants agreed and accepted the findings raised in the reports as a true reflection of the problems and challenges in the fish value chain in the community and the surrounding communities but indicated that the solutions should be taken seriously.



A cross section of participants during the discussions

Closing

The meeting came to an end after nearly three hours. The team thanked the participants for taking time out of their buy schedules to attend the programme.