

Research Note

Strengthening Extension Programmes in Shrimp Farming

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The aquaculture industry faces several risks in its promotion and development. In order to promote the technology of shrimp culture as a profitable industry, it is absolutely essential to identify the problems confronted by the shrimp farmers and to adopt necessary remedial measures. In this regard a study was conducted in Nagapattinam and Thanjavur districts of Tamil Nadu, during the year 2000 and 2001. A sample size of 150 shrimp farmers was selected from each district through purposive sampling method. The respondents were asked an open-ended question to elicit important problems faced by them. The respondents were also asked to suggest important measures, which in their opinion would help solving problems faced by them.

From Table 1 it could be observed that majority of farmers (93%) expressed their readiness to attend advanced training programmes if organised. The respondents who had already undergone training said that they had training in the year 1992 and subsequently had no refresher course or any other programme to attend till date. They evinced keen interest to undergo training in management of diseases, water, soil, feed and pond. It is evident from the study, that

more than half of the respondents – 60% in Nagapattinam and 56% in Thanjavur – requested the Government agencies to undertake publication of their finding for the benefit of the farming community. Shrimp farmers are heterogeneous in nature in respect of their status of knowledge, attitudes, skills and educational levels. 61.33% of the respondents in Nagapattinam and 52% of the respondents in Thanjavur pointed to the inadequacy of information as a major problem in respect of latest technologies. The recent technologies for prevention of shrimp disease were inaccessible to them. It could be seen from the data collected that 58.00% of the target group from Nagapattinam and 40.67% from Thanjavur felt the information systems available today to them were limited to the magazines published by individuals interested in aquaculture and various write-ups that appear in the dailies enlightening the problems in aquaculture. In this regard, the farmers requested the Government agencies to make the information available with them to be passed on to the farming community in easily understandable form of leaflets, folders, pictorial representations, slogans, bulletins and booklets etc. Deboral Vimala *et al*, (2002) reported that publication only in scientific journals and newsletters did not help to keep the public sufficiently

Table 1. Problems pertaining to extension

Type of problems	Multiple responses		
	Nagapattinam Shrimp farmers n= 150	Thanjavur Shrimp farmers n= 150	Total n=300
Need for farmers training	138 (92.00)	141 (94.00)	279 (93.00)
Lack of publications in vernacular language	90 (60.00)	84 (56.00)	174 (58.00)
Scarce publication of extension manuals on disease	92 (61.33)	78 (52.00)	170 (56.67)
Non-availability of extension manuals on shrimp farming	87 (58.00)	61 (40.67)	148 (49.30)
Lack of extension services	66 (44.00)	42 (28.00)	108 (36.00)
Inadequate technical capacity within the extension system	34 (22.67)	12 (8.00)	46 (15.33)
Weaker Extension and Research Personnel	9 (6.00)	15 (10.00)	24 (8.00)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of total

Table 2. Suggestions pertaining to extension

Measures suggested	Multiple responses		
	Nagapattinam Shrimp farmers n= 150	Thanjavur Shrimp farmers n= 150	Total N=300
Need based training programmes on current issues	136 (90.67)	139 (92.67)	275 (91.67)
Vernacular publications	79 (52.67)	81 (54.00)	160 (53.33)
Publications through magazines/farm science journals on shrimp disease	87 (58.00)	64 (42.67)	151 (50.33)
Publications of extension manuals on shrimp farming	71 (47.33)	59 (39.33)	130 (43.33)
Need of visits by multi-disciplinary team of scientists to the shrimp farms	52 (34.67)	40 (26.67)	92 (30.67)
Improving research-extension linkages	5 (3.33)	11 (7.33)	16 (5.33)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of total

informed. The problem of lack of extension services was reported by 44% of respondents in Nagapattinam and 28% in Thanjavur districts. They said that many of the research findings and technologies are not propagated or effectively demonstrated. Among the total, 15.33% of farmers expressed that information technology dealt with only routine information and were not specific/proven for adoption in specified site/farm conditions. Weaker research-extension linkages were considered as one of the problems by 8.00% of the respondents. Action from Government side was lacking to bridge the gap between research and extension.

It is evident from Table 2 that the respondents from both the districts wanted regular extension programmes like state sponsored training programmes for capacity building and efficiency increase at all levels of extension functionaries, taking into account their budgetary requirements. They emphasized that technical personnel must have service orientation in extending technical assistance relevant to shrimp farming. They also desired to have adequate exposure to the technology of shrimp culture through demonstrations and training. With regard to the publication of extension manuals in vernacular language 52.67% of respondents in Nagapattinam and 54.07% in Thanjavur requested Research Institutes, State Governments or Marine Products Export Development Authority to undertake publication of standard reference manuals detailing the technical part in all the regional languages of the maritime states. Such manuals will prove to be a boon to the shrimp farmers. With regard to non-availability of manuals on shrimp disease, 58% in Nagapattinam and 42.67% in Thanjavur voiced their

concern and emphasized the need for containing the salient and relevant information regarding common shrimp disease, pictures with clinical signs of diseases, methods of prevention and control. Simple posters explaining the need of diagnosis, methods of control of shrimp diseases etc. would also be helpful. About 47.33% in Nagapattinam and 39.33% in Thanjavur expressed their keenness to update their knowledge with latest information on shrimp farming. Within the target group about 34.67% in Nagapattinam and 26.67% in Thanjavur requested the State Government to provide extension support for not only identifying beneficiaries but also for providing them with adequate information on culture through visits by a multi-disciplinary team of scientists. For improving extension activities, the BFDAs in the district may provide the needed guidance and assistance. The improvement of research – extension linkages was pointed out by 5.33% of the total respondents.

Fisheries extension system should be made more purposeful to the target group by strengthening the mechanism of transferring technologies standardized by scientists. There is need for an integrated thinking as a whole, which could include clearing the backlog injustices perpetrated by the extension system (Govindaraj, *et.al.*, 1994; Sena *et.al.*, 2000). This is the most important requirement of building up the linkages among the research institutions, extension agencies and shrimp farmers. Better understanding of farmers' real need, their socio-economic condition and closer involvement of farmers in extension activities will bring forth definite solutions to their problems.

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