CHAPTER VII

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS AND POLICY MEASURES

A summary of the findings of the study, conclusion, suggestions and policy measures are given in this concluding chapter.

Findings

(1) All the sample fishing households (738) belong to Hindu religion and all of them are of the same caste (Parvada Kulam). Among them, a sizable number of households belong to the sub-caste of Kallar (30.80 per cent). There are also other sub-caste, namely, Mudaliar (23.20 per cent), Udayar (16.50 per cent), Pillai (15.80 per cent), and Chettiar (13.70 per cent).

(2) Among the total sample fishing population of 3186, around 22 per cent (696) are children below the age of 14 years, and the rest (2490) around 78 per cent are fishermen and fisherwomen. The average size of the sample fishing households varies from 4 to 5 members.

(3) In the fisherfolk community, marriage gives a social status to all the individuals (male and female). Among the total male and female sample population of 2490, around 77 per cent (1925) are married and only 21.20 per cent are unmarried (526). Of the married, 37 (1.90 per cent) are widows and widowers.
(4) The study has revealed that more than one-third of the fisherfolk are illiterates. Of the total respondents 684 (21.50 per cent) have completed school education. Only 29 respondents (0.90 per cent) have had the benefit of collegiate education.

(5) Nearly half of the sample fishing villages lack basic infrastructural facilities. 1 lout of 22 villages are classified as having less infrastructural facilities, 6 villages have some infrastructural facilities and only 5 villages have all infrastructural facilities.

(6) More than half of the sample fisherfolk families belong to labouring class who do not own any craft for fishing. Out of 738 sample households 402 (54.5 per cent) belong to (NCO/LC) No Craft Owner / Labouring Class. Among the craft owners, (MCO) Mechanised Craft Owner households (226) are more than double that of the (NMCO) Non-Mechanised Craft Owner households (110).

(7) The study reveals that the fisherfolk are keen in engaging themselves in one occupation or other. They do not want to remain idle. Out of the total sample population of 2490 excluding children, aged and disabled persons, 1517 fisherfolk are income - earners indulged in performing fishing activity, fishing related activity and other activities.

(8) The study clearly establishes the fact that the fisherfolk are strenuous workers who labour for about 13 hours on an average per day. Even fisherwomen apart from performing household activities, on an average engage themselves for 9 hours per day to earn income.
The study has shown that ownership of craft is a major factor in increasing the income of fisherfolk families. While the average income per household is Rs. 60762/- and Rs. 41416/- for the mechanised craft owners and non-mechanised craft owners respectively, it is Rs. 37617/- for no craft owners / labouring class households.

The first hypothesis, "there are no significant differences in the distribution of income among the various categories of the fisherfolk families" is not supported by the data. The collected data have been analysed by means of applying statistical tools to test this hypothesis. The results reveal that, (a) the gross income of the fisherfolk families vary among the ownership of categories of craft, (b) there is a significant variation in the total income earned by the fishermen from the fishing activity, fishing related activity and also from the other activity, and (c) there is 'wide inequality' in income distribution among the fisherfolk families in each category.

The second hypothesis, "there is no marked change in the consumption pattern of various categories of fisherfolk families", is found to be not supported by the collected data. The average annual family expenditure is Rs. 56406/- for the MCO category, Rs. 30173/- for the NMCO category and Rs. 26750/- for the NCO / LC category. There is also wide variation in different items of expenditure. The expenditure on food and non-food items are 24.80 per cent and 75.20 per cent for MCO group, 38.00 per cent and 62.00 per cent for NMCO group and 47.70 per cent and 52.30 per cent for NCO / LC group. Expenditures on food, transport, entertainment, maintenance of house, maintenance of fishing implements and repayment of loan reveal significant variations among the three categories. But with
regard to expenditure on education, medicine, clothing, gambling and liquor there is no significant difference between the three groups.

(12) The fisherfolk families have to incur heavy overhead costs compared to lower operating costs when they resort to fishing activity. The overhead costs (76.80 per cent) are more than 3 times the operating costs (23.20 per cent). The procurement and maintenance of fishing crafts involves heavy capital expenditure which results in borrowing. Consequently the fisherfolk families have to pay interest on loans leading to a further increase in capital expenditure.

(13) The findings of this study reveal that the third hypothesis, viz, "the nature and magnitude of indebtedness varies significantly among the fisherfolk families." is found to be correct. There is significant variation in the borrowings from the formal and informal sources, between the three categories of the fisherfolk families. From the two sources, the MCO has borrowed 91.20 per cent and 8.80 per cent, the NMCO 61.20 per cent and 38.80 per cent and the NCO / LC 78.80 per cent and 21.20 per cent respectively.

(14) The study reveals that all fisherfolk families own substantial assets. The average value of real assets is Rs.102244/-, while that of the value of conventional assets and the normal assets are Rs.52613/- and Rs. 37283/- respectively. The values of non-conventional and money assets are Rs.7735/- and Rs. 6368/- respectively.

(15) The analysis of the average annual net income per family or per household indicates that while MCO category earns about Rs. 22962/-, NMCO category earns about Rs.31349/- and the NCO / LC category earns to the
tune of Rs. 34179/-. The average net annual income is lower in the case of MCO and NMCO compared to NCO / LC since the first two categories being craft owners have incurred high operational costs and paid interest on borrowings.

16) It is clear that fishery co-operatives are not successful in the study area. As the Fisheries Department extends benefits only to fisherfolk who are members of co-operative societies, fishermen or fisherwomen have become members of such co-operative societies. 80 per cent of fishermen and 83 per cent of fisherwomen are the members of fishery co-operative societies.

17) It is significant that the study has revealed that the role of fisherwomen as domestic worker, income earner and decision maker is well recognized. Womenfolk do assist the fishermen in their activities.

18) The fourth hypothesis, "there is no difference between the working women and housewives with regard to their social awareness", is not upheld in this study. But with regard to the general awareness, especially the policy measures and the welfare schemes for the fisherfolk, the knowledge of working women (93.10 per cent) is better than the housewives (58.00 per cent). There is difference between the two categories with regard to their awareness of social and general issues and therefore the hypothesis is disproved.
Policy Measures

This study has brought out the following policy measures,

1. Introduction of an insurance policy for the fishing crafts and gear will reduce the risk in handling the fishing implements by the owners of the crafts. The government should introduce new schemes for the fisherfolk to augment the fish catch by means of deep-sea fishing. Deep sea fishing is highly capital intensive and risk prone.

2. In order to reduce the debt burden of the owners of fishing implements, the rate of interest on loans towards the purchase of fishing implements and conditions governing repayment of loans should be favourable to the fisherfolk. Only then more and more fishermen will come forward to buy, the mechanised fishing implements. The benefits of such a development are:

(i) Increased production of marine fish, (ii) Enhancing the status and living conditions of the fishing population, (iii) Increasing the contribution to foreign exchange of the country from fisheries, (iv) Raising the availability of fish for domestic consumption, and (v) Serving as a second line of defence.

3. The Tamilnadu Fisheries Development Corporation (TNFDC) and Fish Farmers Development Agency (FFDA) attempted to supply fishing inputs and undertake marketing of fish in some of the centres. The schemes failed due to various administrative and management lapses. The role of middlemen in the fish marketing system continues unabated, due to the pressing need for cash among the fishing households. Even an occasional bumper catch does not help the fishermen to increase their income. This can be rectified only through the
government policy aiming at starting a full fledged co-operative society that would deal with processing, storing and distribution of fish. The government should announce a policy of providing support prices for the varieties of fish which are caught in large quantities now and then. The support prices can be efficiently implemented only when there is a public agency to purchase fish.

4. The functioning of fishery co-operatives is to be given importance. Starting of fishermen and fisherwomen technical training centres, development of berthing and landing facilities in important fishing grounds, construction of ice plants and cold storage, replacing the old fish curing yards, setting up of huge processing plants, to assist womenfolk by means of providing loans for starting self-employment schemes, transporting the catch to the market for sale are some of the areas, where the government should initiate adequate policy measures to enhance marine fisheries.

Suggestions

1. In the marine fishing, maximum labour force could be employed. Most of the fishermen operate non-mechanised crafts with a cheap variety of nets and a significant number of them remain only as wage-earners (labour class) without having fishing crafts. Hence, the government can formulate a scheme to supply credit to this category of fishermen on easy terms and conditions for purchasing fishing implements.

2. Marine fishing sector also provides more employment opportunity during the post-harvest period. Improved fish handling by means of icing, storage in insulated boxes will increase the earnings for the working fisherwomen.
3. As more and more fisherwomen are engaged in the processing of fish, such as salting and sun drying, the possibility of hygienic way of drying fish in polyethylene tents and selling them will enhance their sales, in the domestic and overseas markets.

4. In India, the prawn head and shell fish wastes are thrown out from the processing units causing considerable environmental pollution. The government should take steps to start plants to prepare fish meal for the birds or fodder for animals by using such wastes through the fishery co-operatives.

5 Some of the marine products have pharmaceutical importance, (shark liver oil and sea-horses). All the pharmaceutically important marine products should be identified and steps should be taken to extract the medicinal properties of the marine products.

6 Regarding the formulation of new marine fishery policies, the non-mechanised crafts should be provided an exclusive fringe zone for fishing, so that the mechanised crafts will extend their fishing to wider areas. As a fuel saving measure, the utilization of sails by the mechanised crafts has to be encouraged.

7. For transporting the fresh and dried fish, the public passenger transport system should be tuned. Facilities for quick and safe transportation must be developed. The possibility of operating a separate mini bus, a tempo or a van should be explored. This can be undertaken by the fishery co-operatives, on pay and use basis, at least for the members of the co-operatives.

8. In order to uplift the living conditions of the fishing population, more of infrastructural facilities should be furnished, which will in turn reduce their strains and stress for their better living in the villages.
9. The authorities concerned should provide the basic necessaries of life, such as, good drinking water, street lights in all the streets and regular transport facilities with pucca link roads.

10. Providing employment opportunities to the fishermen and fisherwomen, during the lean season, will enable them to minimise their borrowings, to meet out the consumption expenditure to a certain extent.

11. The government should increase the sum of Rs. 45/- per-household paid by the members of the fishery co-operatives, towards National Marine Fishermen Savings cum Relief Fund, to Rs. 100/- per household. This will help the fisherfolk families to some extent, during the lean season, to meet out their consumption expenditure. The government should take steps to disburse quickly, the same amount by atleast, in the beginning of the lean season (say, towards the end of the month of September).

The present study is intended only to highlight the socio-economic condition of a fishing community which is one of the major functional groups. An attempt has been made to throw light on the various socio-economic problems confronting it such as, educational backwardness, indebtedness, lack of adequate infrastructural facilities and lack of thrust on co-operative development which would strengthen the economic status of the community. There are several other areas relating to this industry on which future research studies can concentrate. To mention some of them:

1) Inter-district and inter-state study on socio-economic characteristics of fisherfolk families will be an useful area for research.
2) A study on Production and Marketing Management of marine fishing of Tamilnadu can be compared with the other States in India.
3) Inter-state level comparison can be made on the growth and development of fishery co-operative societies.

4) No study has been made to analyse the impact of financial institutions in providing finance to the fishing industry.

5) Cost-Benefit analysis of mechanisation and non-mechanisation in marine fishing is yet another area for research.

6) Drop-outs from the schools of the fishing villages of one State can be compared to the other States in India.

7) The role of non-governmental organisations among the fishing villages in Tamilnadu can be studied.

Extensive and comprehensive area development programmes for the entire coastal belt is required to improve the socio-economic conditions of the fishing population. On the basis of town planning in the cities, each fishing centre/village requires extensive programmes for the development. The immense scope of aquaculture development and tourist attraction of several spots of coastal belt should be given priority in the programmes. In this context, it is better to form a Coastal Zone Development Authority (CZDA) in each maritime state, exclusively to look after the capacious development of the coastal region.