

MARKET CHANNELS AND
MARKETING INFRASTRUCTURES
OF THE BANGOS INDUSTRY

by

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This paper dwells on the catching and handling of bangos fry from the fishing ground to the market. It also includes the harvesting of bangos, handling and final marketing of the product. The problems of market channels and marketing infrastructures inherent in the bangos industry have also been discussed with recommendations for their possible improvement.

Collecting Gears

At present, there are four collecting gears used for bangos fry and they are known as the saplad, sayod, or sagap, sakag, and the bull trawl.

a. Saplad - This is a stationary bamboo trap set at the mouth of rivers, estuaries and tidal creeks. It consists of a V-shaped barricade of crushed bamboo set firmly at the bottom ground facing downstream. At the point of intersection of the crushed bamboo walls is a gate through which the fry enters into the saplad proper, a half-hoop net of sinamay 1.5 m long and 60 cm wide and attached by string to two parallel bamboo poles. The trap is set in shallow water about a meter high.

b. Sayod or Sagap - A seine made of either sinamay or fine-meshed cotton netting measuring about 1.5 m wide and 5 m long. Two fishermen, one at each end, drag the seine along the shore.

c. Sakag - A push-net also used for catching shrimps and other shallow-water forms. It is made of either sinamay or cotton netting and is mounted on a collapsible, triangular frame. It is generally used in wading depths, although it may be operated on deeper waters by having it mounted from a banca.

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d. Bull Trawl - A fan-like structure made of whole bamboos to enable it to float and wrapped around with nylon. The top open end is also made up of whole bamboo in the rectangular shape also wrapped around with fine mesh netting where the fry is collected. This bull trawl can be pushed from the catching end or pulled with a rope tied on the V-shaped end by hand or by a motorized banca.

Transportation Facilities

Fry caught through the different methods described above are placed in oxygenated plastic containers by the gatherers and immediately brought to the concessionaires' station. Here they transfer the fry from the plastic containers into big round earthen jars to give more room for the fry and to keep them cool. The cooling effect of the jars on the fry reduces mortality.

Buyers go to the concessionaires' station to purchase fry for their nurseries. They normally buy fry from the nearest source to stock their ponds during the gathering season. In transporting the fry, they use the most reliable and fastest combination of land, water, or air routes because the commodity is delicate and highly perishable.

The transfer of fry to nurseries in different parts of the country involves great risks.

Fish farmers in need of fry get their supply mostly from the nurseries. Farmers who obtain the fingerlings from the nurseries transport them in big boats with powerful motors to ensure a safe and uninterrupted journey. The boat is filled with water and this is aerated by pumping continuously.

Since the fry cannot live long under unfavorable conditions, great care must be exercised in handling and transporting them. Oxygenated bags with water is used to carry the fry from one place to another to ensure survival.

When the fish have grown into marketable size, a fast and reliable means of transportation, as well as an efficient system of communication, again becomes of great importance. As it is, fish farmers encounter difficulties and incur so much expense in bringing their products to the market because of the deplorable state of the roads and available means of transportation. These factors adversely affect freshness of the fish to the disadvantage of both the consumers and the producers.

Fishpond operation in the Philippines covers an approximate area of about 176,000 hectares, scattered all over the country. Out of this number, only a few are fully developed, the majority being only partially developed and devoted to the culture of bangos.

Assuming that the 176,000 hectares of fishponds can produce one ton per hectare of bangos each harvest time, transportation facilities will likewise have to be utilized to a great extent. After a long journey to the market, the fish may still have to travel three more times before it finally reaches the dining table. A truck loaded with three tons of fish per trip will have to make a total of 58,000 trips in order to transport all of the products.

Besides transporting the fish, operators also need transportation for the ice, in order to keep and preserve the fish. At a minimum requirement of one-half ton of ice for every ton of fish, 88,000 tons of ice will be needed for the assumed total fish output.

In addition to the delivery of fingerlings, fry, marketable fish and ice, transportation for the fertilizers and other materials, machinery, motors, nets, etc. used in fishponds are also needed.

Market Channels

Bangos are harvested after they have reached the desired weight or size. Desired weight or size is relative to consumer demand and market price. They are then readied for shipment to the different wholesale distribution centers. In other words, harvesting occurs if the owner/operator decides to dispose his product at a particular market situation to realize immediate source of income.

Methods of marketing bangos vary according to the practice in the locality where they are sold. For example, fishponds near the wholesale centers bring their produce in motorized bancas direct to the wholesale market area. To keep the fish fresh, the bottom of the bancas are first laid with ice, then the fish are placed in the bancas alternately with ice until the bancas are filled.

In the wholesale center or market, the bangos are consigned to the wholesaler (consignitario) or concessionaire, who in turn sells the fish to the retailers.

The retailers bring the fish to the public markets to sell either directly to consumers or to sub-retailers. No monetary payment passes between the wholesaler and the retailer, neither is any receipt issued to the retailer by the wholesaler whatsoever. Transactions are based on

mutual trust and goodwill. Payment is usually given to the concessionaire on the retailer's next buying trip. This practice has always been followed.

Another practice in the wholesale market is the strange way of pricing the bangos, which come in different sizes and therefore command different prices. The owner of the fish who is the real seller does not state the price. It is the buyer or the retailer who does. Since no operator is aware of the date of harvest of other operators, the market may be over-supplied or under-supplied as the case may be. This problem can be remedied through coordination among operators so that their harvest may be timed in order to stabilize price of the fish.

Infrastructure

The biggest bangos market in Manila is Divisoria. In Malabon, Rizal, there are the Hulong Duhat and Poblacion markets; in the North Bay Boulevard, the North Bay Boulevard market; in Bulacan are Taliptip, Hagonoy and Atlag; in Pampanga, Guagua; in Bataan, Orani; in Iloilo, the Pier Area; and in Lucena City, the Lucena market. Some of these places are nondescript and make-shift structures if at all, so that in most instances, they are difficult to locate. Sometimes the commodity is sold on the sidewalks, rain or shine, as they do in Divisoria. Some of these places are also very unsanitary.

Ica Plants

It is practically impossible for fish farmers to operate without ice; however, ice plants are unknown in many places where large areas of fishponds are located. On the other hand, some places with no ice plants do not produce enough for the needs of operators in the area.

Because of lack of sufficient ice and sometimes because of its prohibitive price, operators often experience great frustration. They have no recourse but to secure ice from distant places thus involving loss of time, effort and money.

A glaring example of this case is San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. The place is supposed to be progressive as large areas of fishponds are located there, but unfortunately, the town does not have an ice plant. The operators buy their ice requirement from Manila and ship them all the way to San Jose either by boat or by plane before harvesting fish which they sell in Manila. In some places, aside from the lack of ice plants, there are also no airports to speak of. This makes marketing doubly difficult and is not conducive to increased production.

Wharves, Airports and Communications

The fish farmers' activities and movements are subject to availability of infrastructures like wharves, airports, roads and communications. Without these facilities, operators suffer substantial losses as a result of poor markets for their products.

In spite of the abundance of bangos fry in Palawan, for example, it is impossible to obtain fry for transport to Manila and other places because of the lack of good wharves, roads, airports and reliable means of communication. Palawan has one small airport but this is not enough to service the demand. There are also many other places that have the same problems. Fry transport can, therefore, be effectively realized by the existence of an efficient and reliable means of transportation and communication.

Conclusions and Recommendation

With government support, steps can be taken towards the building of modern markets with all the necessary equipment and storage facilities, as well as the required manpower to maintain its hygienic condition at all times.

A great majority of the fishponds now in operation are not fully developed, resulting in low average production and higher cost. A cursory examination of this situation shows that the more undeveloped or under-developed fishponds are government lands being leased to individuals or duly organized corporations.

The primary reason for non-development or under-development is usually financial. The operators do not have the necessary capital to develop these areas. Although lending institutions are always ready to help, the operators cannot avail themselves of the help being extended to them because of the delay caused by some government offices in processing the necessary papers required.

Government offices should put in writing their standing operating procedures, specifying the period of time within which a certain paper or document submitted will be acted upon and released. This is imperative so that the public may know in advance the time required before a proposal can be approved by the said offices.

Another major problem facing the fish farmers is the lack of ice or its prohibitive cost, if ever it is available. It is recommended that the government put up ice plants or encourage private individuals to do so. As to the cost of ice, the government should step in and control the price.

Today, what we call a block of ice that is being sold is far short in terms of volume and weight than the same block of ice being sold some five years ago.