Roveena Vandana Chand et al., J Marine Sci Res Dev 2014, 4:3
http://dx.doi.org/10.4172/2155-9910.S1.006

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2nd International Conference on
Oceanography
July 21-23, 2014 Hampton Inn Tropicana, Las Vegas, USA

Improvements in beche-de-mer fishery through sustainable harvesting in Fiji Islands

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Beche-de-mer (BDM) fishery in Fiji dates back to over two centuries. This trade was initiated by the Chinese communities in the early 1800's for its delicacy and medicinal properties. The offer of the value for the BDM was very high and this prompted the Fijian communities to harvest bulk of sea cucumbers from high to low value species. The most fished species was *Holothuriascabra* (Sandfish) due to its high demand from the Asian markets. Due to over harvesting Fijian government emphasized a permanent ban on *H. scabra* from exports and as a result *H. fuscogilva* (White teatfish) became the next target species for harvests. In addition to the ban an export size limit of 7.62cm was placed on dried beche-de-mer products. The data in this study was gathered through direct interviews with the fishers/harvesters and the senior fisheries officials in Fiji Islands dealing with the sea cucumber fishery in a way to improving BDM fishery in Fiji Islands. With the current high value species (White teatfish and Black teatfish (*H. whitmaei*)) harvested at a considerable rate, there is no management plan to replace the current declining stock. The findings from this study indicated that Fiji lacks sustainable harvesting of sea cucumber sand does not have any seasonal closures. The fishers were allowed to harvest all year around. This study highly recommended for an effective management plan be in placed in Fiji for the betterment of BDM fishery and a time scale be given for the current stock to recover.

Biography

Roveena Vandana Chand is a current Post Graduate student and a Teaching Assistant at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji Islands. Her current field involves sustainable management and conservation of marine resources that are on a verge of getting endangered or are facing extinction. She has a keen interest in marine and plant biology conservation.

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