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Effect of harvest and post-harvest processing methods on quality of beche-de-mer in Fiji Islands

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Beche-de-mer is one of the important fisheries in Fiji Islands and earns Fiji good revenue each year. The harvesting and processing has been done in Fiji for over two centuries. The processing technique for sea cucumbers remains the supreme method today with very little modifications over Fijian generations. Processing of sea cucumbers involve first boiling, slitting and gutting, smoke drying and sun drying. Some beche-de-mer processors in Fiji including the fishers incorporate salting method to add value to the final product. The findings from this study indicated that beche-de-mer fishers in Fiji accelerated the processing methods for income thus eradicating necessary steps during processing and affecting the overall acceptance quality of the final product. The study indicated that first boiling and smoking were two processing stages that reduced the product quality at consumer level. A well processed product is of good odor, appearance, shape, colour, size and reduced moisture content. Processed products from fishers sold to the main exporters are of low quality such as products are not cleaned properly, contaminated with sand, skin are peeled as result of over boiling and are burnt due to inappropriate smoking technique that greatly impacted on the quality of beche-de-mer. This study recommends an increased awareness and education programs be established to improve the quality of beche-de-mer in Fiji Islands. It is also aimed to hold workshop programs for fishers to have hands on training for better processing technique for better quality and value of the product.

Biography

Ravinesh Ram is a PhD candidate at James Cook University, Townsville, Australia and currently researching on "Influence of processing techniques on quality and nutritional composition of tropical sea cucumbers". The author conducted his masters research in Fiji Islands on the research topic "Impacts of harvest and post-harvest processing techniques on quality and value of beche-de-mer in Fiji Islands" and had been in the academics for almost eight years. He has contributed enormously to beche-de-mer research projects held by SPC, ACIAR-PARDI and had been part of the ACIAR-PARDI team of Hong Kong/China for project (PARDI/2010/004).

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