Freshwater Mussel (*Batissa violacea*) Fishery and its Value in Fiji

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Abstract

This paper examines the local freshwater mussel, or *kai* (*Batissa violacea*), fishery value chain, its values and contribution to the livelihood of people in Viti Levu, Fiji. The assessment was performed through face-to-face interviews, with the use of semi-structured questionnaires administered to 125 actors. A walk through the value-chain was also conducted that confirmed the sites' environmental conditions. Results revealed that even though the *kai* fishery is dominated by rural women, men were also employed as *kai* processors, transporting agents and exporters. This fishery generated at least 58 other employments through the 500 *kai* harvesters within the five major provinces understudy. These were drivers, boat builders, retailers, processors, exporters, and harvesters. Three sales pathways were identified that determined the revenues and profits: (i) harvesters sell own harvests directly to the consumer at the municipal markets, (ii) harvesters sell through intermediary traders to consumers, and (iii) harvesters sell through processors to supermarkets, hotels or exporters. When revenues and profits were calculated, harvesters earned much less, compared to intermediary traders, processors, and exporters. Major constraints include continuous reduction in catch size of *kai*, lack of transport, and marketing at the local municipal markets that require improvements.

Keywords: *Batissa violacea*; Fiji freshwater mussels; *kai* fishery; marketing; women harvesters

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