The commercial post-harvest loss of deep sea fisheries in Sri Lanka

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Post-harvest loss of fish identifies as fish that are either discarded or sold at relatively lower prices because of differences in quality due to quality deterioration. The post-harvest loss of fish causes economic and social implications such as loss of revenue to the fishers, food wastage, negative impact on food security of the people, and reduce export earnings of the country. In Sri Lanka post-harvest loss of fisheries is a serious concern that needs to be addressed immediately. This study aimed at assessing the commercial post-harvest loss (economic loss): one of the major components of post-harvest loss, of deep sea fisheries in Sri Lanka. Data were collected from IMUL boats (Multi day fishing boats) that unloaded fish at 10 main fishery harbours through the coastal belt of the country. The total samples were 140 IMUL boats. The commercial post-harvest loss (CPHL) was estimated for three fish quality grades that have been commonly practiced by the fishers and traders, such as Grade 1(Q_1)-good, Grade 2(Q_2) - moderate, Grade 3(Q_3) – poor. Estimations were done according to the gear type, such as long line, drift gill net and ring net. Results revealed that the highest average catch, 2,978 kg per trip was recorded in ring netting fisheries. Results further revealed that commercial post-harvest loss was higher in ring net fishing. In ring nets, the commercial post-harvest losses were 24% for skipjack tuna (SJT) and 22% for scads. It was 14% for SJT and 4% for small yellowfin tuna (YFT) in gill net fishing. The commercial post-harvest loss of YFT fish and marlin in long line fishing were 8 and 4% respectively. This study confirmed that a significant amount of fish is lost both in quality and quantity due to the post-harvest losses. Further, commercial post-harvest losses vary by fishing gear and fish variety. It is needed strong measures to improve fish storing facilities and on-board handling practices in deep sea fisheries in Sri Lanka to reduce post-harvest losses and in turn reduce the commercial post-harvest loss in fisheries.

Keywords: IMUL boats, long lines, gill nets, ring net

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