

RESOURCES AND PRODUCTIVITY IN INDIAN FISHERIES

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THE field of fisheries, among the various types of human productive activity, sets itself aside owing to its distinctive characteristics. The chief of these is that it is one of the oldest activities of man and has survived in its present form. As in hunting and fruit gathering, the human being has still to go for the fish though marginal progress has been achieved by such means as artificial breeding of some varieties of fish by controlling the breeding conditions. The second major character is that as the supply conditions remain largely unknown and uncontrolled, the activity is attended by a large measure of uncertainty. Thirdly, since the product is a biological one it is prone to decompose very fast and as such requires well-developed preservation and transport facilities so that it can reach the final consumer in either fresh condition or in a processed form.

The problems in the field of fisheries need attention by various social science disciplines, mainly economics. While it is accepted that contribution by fisheries to the national income, especially that of India is only marginal, it is a sad comment on our research activity that the area has been almost neglected. The natural scientists, especially biologists, also have a share in this neglect, as they are also intimately connected with the supply side of the problem.

Under these conditions, what role the economists in India are expected to play and are capable of playing is a question not only relevant from the point of view of academic interest but also as a point of national urgency. An economist can certainly enter the arena before a biologist like the clown before the entry of the lion and talk on the role of the latter. To start with, the economist visualizes the scope for research and is convinced himself that perhaps the most fundamental and primary need for research lies in the accumulation and presentation of accurate and well defined statistics on fisheries. Meaningful knowledge about the trends of demand and