

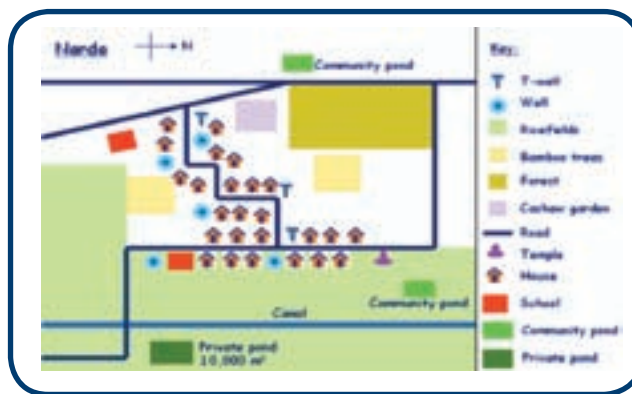
Reading between the lines of data: analysing aquatic animal consumption in West Bengal

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- Curriculum workshops
The findings of the project are being presented to schools and colleges providing training on aquaculture to encourage them not to think of SRS as a bad thing.
- National and provincial workshops
This activity allows the presentation of the importance of SRS to rural livelihoods to a wider audience, with a focus on non-aquaculturists.
- Awareness campaign
Using different forms of media to increase awareness about SRS. Radio and television (including BBC World) have been used.
- Attendance to meetings and conferences.
Researchers have presented at international conferences and technical meetings e.g 7th Asian Fisheries Forum and FAO Technical Expert Meeting on aquatic biodiversity and National Fish Fortnight event in Bangladesh (Aug 2005).
- Webpage
Most of the SRS information such as posters; policy briefs; project technical report; project summary reports are now available in AFGRP website.



Self-recruiting species (SRS) include all those species that survive and reproduce in farmer managed systems, such as ponds and ricefields, without being restocked – i.e. they are self-recruiting. SRS include many fish species, prawns and shrimps, crabs, snails and frogs. Where these and other species occur in wild systems, such as rivers and lakes, they are classed as wild species. Any species that are restocked by farmers are classed as cultured species.



The research included interviews with 12 households in each of four different villages in West Bengal. They shared with us, amongst other things, information on their consumption habits, their aquatic animal collection and purchases, and preferences for different species due to taste, ease of collection etc. They also helped draw maps of their villages, showing all the local water resources, their houses, ricefields and ponds. Here we have included an electronic interpretation of a map of one village.

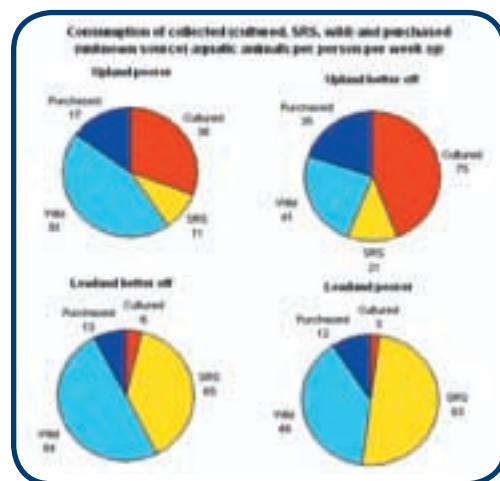
The data from these four communities in West Bengal showed that reliance on SRS seemed more linked to area than wellbeing status, which was a different conclusion than for the other countries surveyed for the study. In Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Bangladesh, data showed that SRS from farmer managed systems (ponds, ditches and rice fields) are most important in upland areas where other waterbodies (lakes, canals) are limited.

However, the West Bengal data did not reveal the same trend. In the pie-charts included here, SRS consumption (in yellow) makes up around half of the total aquatic animal consumption of lowland households

surveyed, but only 10-12% of upland consumption. Upland households appear to rely more on cultured and wild aquatic animals. So why the difference? In the upland areas there are very few water resources and these are typically connected to rice fields for relatively short periods of the year. Where ponds do exist they are not usually connected to the wider rice field system and there is a concentration on culturing carps. There is also a greater occurrence of large reservoirs and canals where catches are considered 'wild'.

Data collected on which species of SRS are eaten shows that lowland households eat fish, prawns, snails, crabs and eels, but upland households eat only fish and prawns. An initial technical explanation maybe

that these species do not occur or that different culturing methods prevent SRS from moving between waterbodies, but in this project we also collected socio-cultural



data and that information highlights strong cultural reasons why most households in the upland communities do not eat snails, crabs and eels. However, there are still opportunities to increase the availability of the preferred fish and prawns using ideas like (i) conserving some water and broodstock in ponds in the dry season and (ii) not using chemicals to remove SRS from culture ponds before stocking.

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