



WORLD FISHERIES DAY 2020

**An award-winning story of “Sahyadri Aquarium Fish Producer Company Ltd, Kerala”
under category “Fish Farmer Producer Organization”**

A collaborative platform for Ornamental fish trading

BACKGROUND:

Fish farmers in Kerala have been growing ornamental fish in ponds constructed in their backyards. In 2009, a subsidy scheme was introduced by the Government to promote ornamental fish culture. Farmers utilized the subsidy and established different types of fish tanks like cement tank, fibre-glass tank, etc, to rear ornamental fish. Once the fish reared reaches marketable size, farmers would approach the local aquarium shop owners to get appropriate price for selling the fish reared. The aquarium shop owners would deliberately quote lesser price than export market price to earn higher profit margins. The fish farmers hence ended up making losses. Also, it was very challenging for the farmers to sell the complete stock. Due to mismatch between the supply & demand and waiting time to get the right buyer, the fish size would increase resulting into rejection of the lot and accumulation of stock.

Due to such unfortunate market conditions being prevalent, the farmers approached MPEDA (Marine Products Export Development Authority) for help. In order to resolve the issue, MPEDA suggested the fish farmers to start a Producer Company.

INCEPTION TO EVOLUTION:

Sahyadri Aquarium Fish Producer Company was started in 2014 under the suggestion and guidance of MPEDA. Ornamental fish farmers came forward to register in the company with the hope to improve their businesses.



Figure 1: Sahyadri Aquarium Fish Producer Company Limited

To begin with, few farmer groups were formed, and a small land was taken to set up a market. Pamphlets were distributed to aquarium shop owners as invitations, followed by frequent phone calls requesting the shop owners to visit the market. In the beginning, the aquarium shop owners were reluctant to visit the market. Due to the numerous endeavours taken up and perseverance of ornamental fish farmers from the Sahyadri Company, the shop owners started visiting regularly. Eventually, the market began to grow, and participation of owners increased significantly. By 2018, there was a phenomenal progress in terms of sellers and buyers. Currently,

there are 300 aquarium shop owners visiting the market; they are also digitally connected through WhatsApp group created by Sahyadri. There are two such Whatsapp groups that host approximately 600 shop owners who have shown keen interest in buying ornamental fish.

BUSINESS MODEL:

The market by Sahyadri Seed Producer Company displays diversified collection of ornamental fish with a wide variety of species such as goldfish, guppy, angelfishes, koi carps etc. The fishes range from Rs. 2/fish to Rs. 2000/fish. The sale from the market depends on the requirements which are bought by the aquarium shop owners. Currently, there are 60-70 farmers who are actively trading ornamental fishes through the market, out of which 30 are ‘permanent farmers’ and the remaining are

temporary. 'Permanent farmers' are those who pay Rs. 20,000/-; become stakeholders and willing to bear both profit and loss generated from the business whereas, the temporary farmers' are those who pay a registration fee of Rs. 1,000/- for six months to participate in the market and sell their fish stock.



Figure 2: Ornamental Fish in the market

To ensure safety, precautions are maintained. Sahyadri shares a list of available ornamental fish species digitally through WhatsApp groups for interested buyers to raise requests. Tokens are given to the buyers with time slot for collection from the market. This allows only limited people to be present in the market at any given point of time. Therefore, business is being carried out as usual without much disruption and maintaining social distancing.

WAY FORWARD:

The farmers of the Sahyadri Seed Producer Company envision to empanel the ornamental fish farmers and aquarium shop owners throughout the country and to create one platform for fish trading. The outcome of such a collaborative platform is envisioned as to empower the farmers by increasing their bargaining power and promote fair business practices. The organisation has successfully demonstrated how inclusive growth is possible through consistent efforts and determination to move ahead.



Figure 3: Tuesday market of Ornamental Fish

Currently, the Company generates an income of Rs.2.5 lakhs/day to Rs. 3 lakhs/day through the Tuesday market. The market is regulated and transparency is maintained in all transactions. The buyers get bills for all purchases from the market, fish prices are fixed by the farmer himself and a nominal percentage is added to the base price to arrive at the selling price to the customer.

There has been limited participation in the market due to the pandemic during 2020-21.