



# WORLD FISHERIES DAY 2021 AWARDS

Best Innovation - AUROFISH, Puducherry



## BACKGROUND:

India has very rich aquatic biodiversity spanning the country. In India, there are about 2508 fish species that have so far been documented, of which 1518 inhabit marine waters. Among the sea fishes' tunas form an important fishery resource. The fishery resource potential of oceanic tuna in the Indian EEZ is 213,000 tons with an estimated composition of yellowfin at 54 per cent, skipjack at 40 per cent and Big-eye at 6 per cent. Despite the abundance of tuna fishes, India couldn't harness the tuna resources fully due to extensive use of gill nets for harvesting and poor on-board handling practices followed by the fishermen. Bay of Bengal Program (BOBP) under its GEF and World Bank-funded Ocean Partnership Project (OPP) designed a business model to capture the value of yellowfin fish tuna in the domestic supply chain based on three 3P concept; Planet (Ecological sustainability), Profit (Economic sustainability) and People (Social sustainability). To fulfil the P concept BOBP promoted the use of longline/hand line for Tuna fishing and proper handling and on-board preservation and facilitated the partnership between the harvesters and processors to minimize the role of middlemen. During this process, BOBP identified AUROFISH – a brand of fish and fishery products promoted by Mrs. Anitha Muthuvel.

## ABOUT AUROFISH:

AUROFISH is a brand of fish and fishery products owned by a woman entrepreneur Mrs Anitha Muthuvel. With the support from the Ocean Partnership Project funded by GEF/World Bank and implemented by BOBP, Mrs Anitha has set up a modern fish processing unit by converting her ancestral house and adjacent piece of land at Vaithikuppam village, Puducherry in the year 2018.



Anitha's original tuna dressing and packaging unit

Before Intervention



After Intervention



## INNOVATION:

AUROFISH was started as an innovative model to encourage the fishers to source the fish responsibly and to ensure that the caught fish reaches the consumer in hygienic condition. For this Mrs Anitha webbed a cooperative network of 20 fishers owning small FRP boats from Vaithikuppam and Nadukuppam villages. After having her team of fishermen trained in the post-harvest handling of tuna, Mrs. Anitha agreed to pay double the price if the fish were caught



responsibly and delivered in hygienic conditions; in doing so, she disproved the popular belief that **“MORE FISH MEANS MORE INCOME”**. She convinced the fishers that **“IF THE POTENTIAL VALUE OF FISH IS REALIZED, EVEN LESS FISH ALSO CAN FETCH MORE**

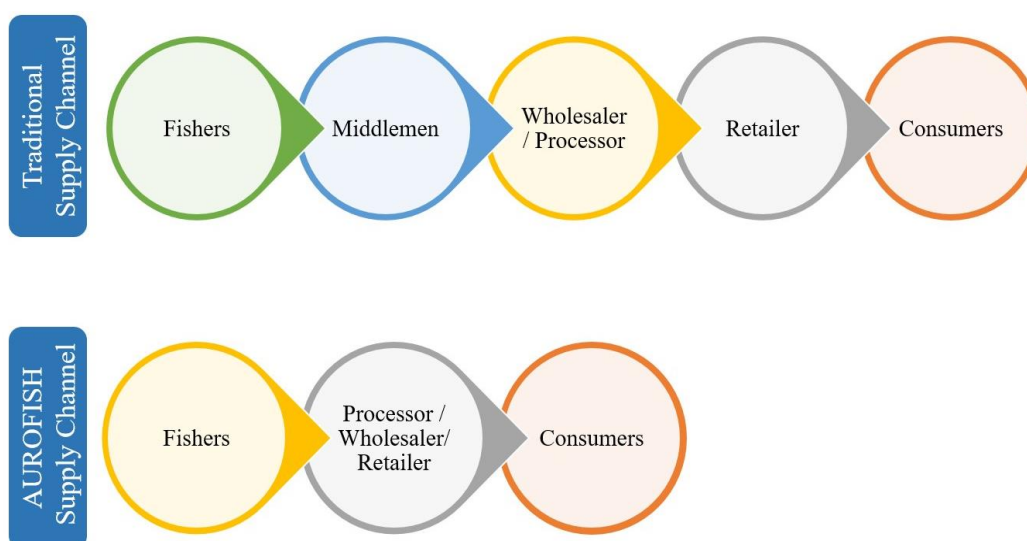
**INCOME”**



**This is what a sashimi grade tuna meat looks like.**

AUROFISH slowly ventured into supplying sashimi-grade ‘ahi’ (yellowfin) tuna loins and other products and tapped Japanese export market. In the meantime, AUROFISH has also ventured into domestic market supplying the best premium grade fresh seafood in retail and whole prices to hotels, restaurants and to high-end supermarkets. Further, AUROFISH started marketing Ready-to-cook products vacuum packed zip-top bags in urban areas. The fish and fish products are stored under the chilled condition at 2-4°C in thermos-boxes filled with ice gel till they reach the end consumers.

AUROFISH has now expanded to other metropolitan regions of India. In the journey, it has not only won many accolades but also created a better future for about 400–500 people involved its value chain.



### Traditional vs AUROFISH Supply Channel



## AWARDS & RECOGNITION:

In recognition of the service rendered by Mrs Anitha Muthuvel, AUROFISH has bagged numerous accolades over the years. Some prominent awards are cited below.

1. India Biodiversity Awards – 2021: Certificate of Appreciation under the category of Sustainable Use of Biological Resources (Individual)
2. K. Chidambaram Memorial Annual Award - 2018 from The Fisheries Technocrat Forum for Entrepreneurship and being role model in popularizing fresh tuna products.
3. Featured in a video film: "Anitha Mouttouvel - A fisheries entrepreneur turns the tide" [https://youtu.be/IQh6ZOdW9\\_E](https://youtu.be/IQh6ZOdW9_E) produced by the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation.
4. Article in Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network (RSN Magazine No. 20 Nov 2021) – "The Game changer – a woman entrepreneur reshaping value chain in Indian fisheries"



### SECTION 4: MEMBERS' UPDATE

#### The Game changer – a woman entrepreneur reshaping value chain in Indian fisheries

Anitha Mouttouvel, proprietor of Aurofish, breaks the glass ceiling!

Anitha Mouttouvel may be the first and only woman entrepreneur in India who runs a small fish processing unit that can compete with the country's modern processing units in terms of quality. Located in Vaithikuppam Village, Puducherry in South India, Anitha, with support from the Ocean Partnership Project funded by GEF/World Bank and implemented by the Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP), has set up a model tuna processing value chain, which ensures that fish is sourced responsibly and managed hygienically until it reaches the retail level.

To ensure that her unit gets quality raw material, Anitha developed cooperative arrangements with a fleet of 20 small FRP boats from Vaithikuppam and Nadukuppam villages. After having her team of fishermen trained in the post-harvest handling of tuna, Anitha agreed to pay double the price if the fish were delivered in good condition; in doing so, she challenged the strong belief that more fish means more income. "No, if you can realize the potential value, less fish can also bring more income," says Anitha.

And now Anitha is our role model! Coming from a typical fisher family, Anitha graduated from the University of Madras in 2004. After her marriage to Mr. Mouttouvel, she started her retail fish business in 2011 from Puducherry Fishing Harbour. But her dreams were much bigger, and she converted her ancestral house in Vaithikuppam village into a small fish dressing unit. However, lack of funds constrained her capacity to modernize it, until BOBP stepped in. With the OPP funds and an additional support from TATA Trust, BOBP was able to convert the dressing unit into a modern fish processing unit.



What makes hers a standout business is her emphasis on preserving quality – an often-neglected aspect in the fish value chain in India. Seafood restaurants in Puducherry soon noticed her products, and are even serving sashimi grade tuna sourced from Anitha. The Aurofish brand that Anitha created has now spread its wings from Puducherry to other metropolitan areas of India, winning accolades on its way and making a better future for about 400-500 people involved in the value chain she now supports.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[www.bobpigo.org](http://www.bobpigo.org)

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