

A Socioeconomic Survey on Seaweed Farming in Zanzibar, Tanzania

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Place of fieldwork: Tanzania

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- Research background

In Zanzibar, carrageenophyte, which is also called carrageenan seaweed, has been cultivated since 1989. Carrageenophyte is raw seaweed used as a food, a cosmetic, a medical ingredient, and so on. It was first farmed in the Philippines in 1969 and was then taken up in other coastal tropical waters because of its short production cycle, low capital requirements, and relatively simple technologies needed. In Zanzibar, farming of this seaweed is steadily growing, and it has recently become the second-most-important export of the island.



Photo 1 A kind of carrageenophyte.

- Research purpose and aim

According to previous research in any African countries, residents in rural areas diversify their livelihoods for purposes of stability and maintenance of subsistence. In Zanzibar, most of the farmers are women who farm relatively small-scale fields, and seaweed farming can thus help diversify their livelihoods.

What properties does seaweed farming have? What are its effects on households' diverse livelihoods? In this study, I make clear the process of farming of carrageenophyte in Zanzibar and people's ways of deriving cash income from it. As a result, I consider the factors that seaweed farming is incorporated in households' diverse livelihoods.

- Results and achievements of the fieldwork



Photo 2 Seaweed farming fields in the intertidal area at Paje.

My study area was Paje, in the southeast of the island, where seaweed farming is a major part of people's livelihoods. I conclude that, because seaweed farming is an insecure income source, farmers cannot rely on it as a sole source of subsistence income. Seaweed has a vulnerability to harm of disease and epiphytes. Thus, production and cash income are not stable. However, seaweed farming nevertheless has some merits for famers. First, the method by which it is farmed is simple, and there is plenty of space in the intertidal area around Paje. Therefore, it is easy for residents to start farming it and there are low capital requirements. Second, it enables the farmers to money when they need it: dried seaweed can stored for a long period, and farmers can sell the product to buyers at any time.

- Implications for future research

Seaweed farming and tourism are the most important industries in Paje as for the island as a whole. However, there are two issues that may cause conflict between these two industries. The first is the use of the intertidal area, and the second is the management and operation of a group that makes seaweed soap as gifts for tourists. How will famers react to these conflicts? I will continue to study these matters in my fieldwork.



Photo 3 Seaweed soap.