



## **Socio-economic status of the freshwater ornamental fish farming in Matara district of Sri Lanka**

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### **Abstract**

Sri Lankan ornamental fish sector has expanded with the increasing number of aquarium owners, growers, breeders, and exporters which has had a favorable impact on the development of the local and export market. The present study was conducted to assess the status of ornamental fish farming in Matara district and identify underlying causes crucial to the industry's sustainability. The survey was conducted for 31 farms selected from 07 Divisional Secretariats where had the highest number of farms using a two-stage stratified random sampling method from the registered 141 ornamental fish farms in 16 Divisional Secretariats. Data were collected from August to November 2023 regarding the production process, economic aspects, marketing aspects, problems, and prospects of ornamental fish farms using a structured and pre-tested questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The results revealed that ornamental fish farming is dominated by middle-aged male farmers who have different educational levels and occupations. Training and experience analysis, which reveals that 67.74% of farmers have undergone training, highlights the importance of formal training. Operational practices mainly focus on breeding and rearing activities, and most depend on their sources of fingerlings. Competitive presence in the local market and their willingness to join the export market highlighted market opportunities. However, high feed costs, infrastructure constraints, and unpredictable yields were identified as challenges faced by farmers in ornamental fish production. Likert scale responses indicated different perceptions among farmers regarding the profitability and market viability of the industry. SWOT analysis focuses on internal and external factors that might affect the industry. This study provides a comprehensive overview of the freshwater ornamental fish industry in Matara district which can be used to gain valuable insights for stakeholders, policy makers, and farmers of the industry.

### **Keywords**

*Freshwater ornamental fish industry, Matara district, socio-economic status, SWOT analysis, operational practices*