Sea cucumbers in Tanzania. In: Conand, C. and Muthiga, N. (Editors), Commercial Sea Cucumbers: A Review for the Western Indian Ocean.

Author Twalibu K. Mmbaga and Yunus D. Mgaya

Abstract

The story of over-exploitation of sea cucumbers in Tanzania has been repeated in many locations throughout the Indian Ocean. Collection methods include (i) hand-picking, (ii) collection by free diving using homemade goggles and (iii) SCUBA diving in a few locations. Neither fishery regulations, nor mariculture or resource inventories have been conducted as steps towards management and conservation of sea cucumber in Tanzania. Data was compiled from various works carried out on the sea cucumber resource in Tanzania and from questionnaires that were given to sea cucumber dealers and fishery officials. This approach revealed several factors underlying the lack of management of sea cucumber resources, notably (a) the extent to which the stock size of this resource is known to fishers of Tanzania, (b) the lack of a proper management framework and stock assessment on sea cucumbers, and (c) scientific orientation of funding agencies and research findings contrary to dealers' level of education and technological capacity. The appropriate actions to achieve successful management of sea cucumbers should be taken in phases. That is, to raise the fishers awareness, carry out resource assessment, implementation of regulations and establishment of a pilot small-scale mariculture activity of the most known species in Tanzania, Holothuria scabra.

Key Word Holothurians, exploitation, mariculture, Western Indian Ocean