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**Identification of potential fish species to be developed into new fishery resources for consumption; Nutrient analysis of some selected fish species in the Anuradhapura District**

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The present study was carried out in Mihintale and suburbs of the Anuradhapura District, where the highest number of active fishers (5,273 in 2009) and operating fishing crafts (1,680 in 2009) in inland fisheries are found. The main objective was to identify the potential fish species that are underutilized and to be developed into new fishery resources in the Anuradhapura District based on nutrient analysis of five selected fish species, namely, *Mastacembelus armatus*, *Mystus cavasius*, *Glossogobius girius*, *Puntius chola* and *Etroplus suratensis*. These non-commercial indigenous fish species were subjected to proximate analysis to determine the crude protein, lipid, ash and moisture content on a dry weight basis. About 15 – 20 specimens from each species were used to prepare 150 g of dry matter for the nutrient analysis. The protein content was highest in *M.armatus* (27.3%) followed by *P.chola* (26.0%). *M. cavasius* had the lowest protein content (14%) while *G.girius* and *E.suratensis* showed protein levels of 21% and 19% respectively. The highest lipid content was recorded in *M. cavasius* (11.7%), while the lowest was in *G. girius* (3.6%). The greatest ash content was recorded for *E. suratensis* (6.7%) while the lowest was for *M. armatus* (4.0%). The highest moisture content was recorded in *M. cavasius* (84.7%) while *P. chola* recorded the lowest (76.6 %). However, both the moisture content and ash content of these five species varied within narrow ranges between 76 – 84 % and 4 – 6.7 % respectively. The present study clearly indicated that the nutritive values of the selected fish species were highly comparable to those of edible freshwater fish species such as, *Oreochromis mossambicus*, *Channa striatus*, *Heteropneustes fossilis* and *Anabas testudineus*. Thus, these five species can be considered as excellent sources of nutrients required for human growth and high-nutrient supplementary feed for domestic animals, birds and fish. Consumer preference for these five fish species was good in Mihintale. It did not vary according to the religion or the number of members in the family, but varied significantly with gender, where female preference was higher. The potential for the commercial exploitation of these species should be further justified by catch statistics and population estimations.