AN ACCOUNT OF BIVALVE FISHERY RESOURCES OF SOUTHERN TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

Bivalve resources comprising of clams, cockles, oysters and mussels are distributed throughout the Indian coast and are exploited by the local fisher groups for their sustenance and livelihood. A study on bivalve exploitation and its diversity was carried out from three coastal districts of Southern Tamil Nadu namely, Thoothukudi, Ramanathapuram and Kannyakumari during 2017. The estimated bivalve exploitation was 3325tonnes contributed by clams(68%) and mussels (32%). Among the three districts, Ramanathapuram contributed 61 % of the total catch followed by Kannyakumari (32%) and Thoothukudi (7%). In all the centres, bivalve exploitation is being carried out by hand picking method. In Thoothukudi district, bivalve exploitation was studied in detail from four centres, viz Karapad bay, Korampallam creek, Punnaikayal and Pazhayakayal. The total estimated bivalve exploitation of Thoothukudi was 236 tonnes. *Meretrix casta, Meretrix meretrix, Paphia malabarica* and *Marcia opimacasta* are the major species with average percentage composition of 84:11:4:2. at Ramanathapuram district, the study was carried out in Athankarai estuary and Chinnapalam bay. In Athankarai estuary *M.casta* was the only species supporting the clam fisheries and the total catch was 1940 tonnes. The estimated catch of bivalve in Chinnapalam was 84.6 tonnes comprised of *Gafrarium pectinatum* (40%) and *Donax* sp. (60%). In Kannyakumari district, mussels were the major resource corroborate bivalve fishery at Colachel, Kadiapattinam, Kodimunai, Kurumpanai and Enayam. The mussel exploitation from Kannyakumari was 1064 tonnes contributed by *Perna indica* (98%) and *Perna viridis* (2%). The exploited clam shells are primarily used as a raw material for lime industry and substantial quantity is used as a poultry feed supplement and lobster feed as well. Chinnapalam has good scope for shell craft industry and mussels exploited from Kannyakumari are used for human consumption.

Key words: Clams, Mussels, Exploitation, Shell craft industry, Lime industry