



MARINE FISHERIES INFORMATION SERVICE

No. 176

April, May, June, 2003



TECHNICAL AND EXTENSION SERIES

CENTRAL MARINE FISHERIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

COCHIN, INDIA

(INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH)

With the decrease in trawl landings throughout the last quarter of 2002, diversification in fishery was noticed at Cochin Fisheries Harbour. Bigger vessels (Drift gill netters, 55 footers) of 110 HP are operating from here, fishing exclusively for sharks. The area of operation is off Maharashtra and Gujarat coast. Shark lines with 500-1000 hooks are operated. The hook number used is 2. Bait fishes used are mostly tuna, depending on the species that they want to catch. The lines are operated at night. During daytime, the nets

are operated mostly for smaller fishes.

The total length of sharks landed varied from 135-165 cm. On 25th February 2003, an adult *Carcharhinus sorrah* (135 cm TL) was cut open and a pup of 37 cm TL was recorded in its body. Most of the sharks when cut open were seen to contain one - two pups. The other species landed include *Rhizoprionodon acutus*, *R. oligolinx*, *Sphyrna lewini*, *Scoliodon laticaudus*, *Alopias vlupens*. Sharks landed are weighed individually and

auctioned. The fins are cut and sold by the merchants separately to the export houses. The flesh is sold to the domestic market, mainly in Kottayam district.

The fins are dry salted and sold at the rate of Rs. 2000 per kilogram dry weight. They are exported to China and Japan for soup preparation, which is a delicacy there. An adult shark that weighs around 65 Kg (wet weight) fetches upto Rs. 6500. On an average, three to four boats land around 100-125 adult sharks and around 25-30 young sharks. In addition to sharks, rays and guitar fishes are also landed. They are caught in the drift gill nets and hooks. The rays landed are mostly huge *Mobula mobula* and *Manta birostris*. Rays landed sold locally.

The boats operate for 20-25 days, with a to and fro

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running time of eight days. Around 150-200 blocks of crushed ice are loaded before departure. The holding capacity of the vessel is 200 tonnes, with an endurance period of 30 days. Around 3500 litres of diesel are used per trip and the total expenditure for each trip works out to be Rs. 80,000. Though these boats operate off Maharashtra, the fishermen prefer to land here for higher prices. Globally, concern on the exploitation of this resource is increasing. With decrease in the catches from trawlers, fishermen seem to diversify into areas where they can reap instant benefits. But the only question is “whether this fishery will survive the test of time ?”

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