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INCIDENTAL HEAVY LANDINGS OF MACKEREL, AT ARANGAMKUPPAM NEAR MADRAS*

During the period 1988-'92, an annual average of 14,340 t of the mackerel, *Rastrelliger kanagurta* were landed along the Tamil Nadu coast. Out of the total mackerel landed during the period, 44% was obtained in 1992. Peak mackerel catches along the east coast occurs in March-April period (*Mar. Fish. Infor. Serv., T&E Ser., No. 63*, 1985). In this connection it was interesting to observe an incidental heavy landings of the mackerel outside the fishing season recorded on 22-6-'92 at Aramgamkuppam landing centre bordering the Pulicat Lake of Chengalpet District.

On 22-6-'92 twenty five bag-net (*Eda-valai*) units of this centre landed with an average of 2.5t of mackerel. The bag-nets were operated by catamarans fitted with outboard engines in the area north east off Pulicat light house in the depth range of 16-20 m. It was estimated from the catch details collected from all the twenty five units landed that a total of nearly 72 t of mackerel were caught on that day. Such a heavy landing of mackerel created a sensation locally being not witnessed in the past. Observations made on subsequent days indicated absence of shoals.

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Fig. 1. Portion of the catch.



Fig. 3. Truck load of iced fish.



Fig. 2. Auctioning of the catch at the landing centre.

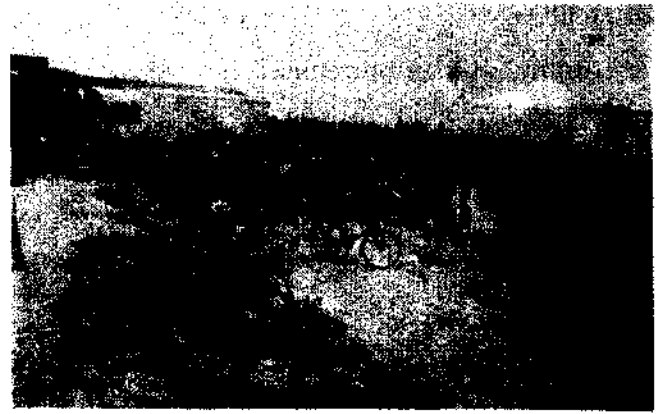


Fig. 4. Insulated vans loading the catch at the centre.

Length frequency data collected revealed that the size range of the species varied between 170-174 mm and 200-204 mm with a predominant size group at 185-189 mm. Few fishes examined were in immature stage of gonadal development.

The entire catch was sold by auction at the

landing centre and the price per basket containing 180-200 fishes weighing about 25 kg, ranged between Rs. 180-190. Since local consumption was less, the bulk of the catch was transported by trucks and insulated vans to markets in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala states.