

Mandapam And Its Environs

SOUVENIR

Edited

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Shrimp Industry In And Around Mandapam

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Mandapam is an important place in view of living marine resources, particularly the shrimp. The term 'Shrimp' includes prawns and lobsters, Shrimp industry has its full compliment of infrastructure facilities from building trawlers to processing at Mandapam.

95% of the shrimp resources at Mandapam comprises of penaeid prawns. *Penaeus semisulcatus* is the main stay in the catches and forms 65% of the prawn catches.

Apart from Mandapam which accounts for 450 mechanised trawlers, nearby Pamban and Rameswaram are also equally important landing Centres. Pamban and Rameswaram have about 60 and 600 mechanised trawlers respectively. Normally only 60% of the boats go for fishing; others being beached for repairs or for periodic servicing.

Pamban and Mandapam based trawlers fish both in Palk Bay and in the Gulf of Mannar. Trawlers have limited approach to the Gulf of Mannar stock as the fishing grounds are deep. But along the southern flank, trawling is done both by mechanised vessels and by non mechanised vessels. The area between the chain of Islets and mainland is trawled by non-mechanised boats taking advantage of the wind force and direction particularly during North East monsoon. But good catches are obtained from the open sea beyond the islands.

The shrimp grounds of Palk Bay are uniformly shallow and quite extensive. Prawn fishing is carried out during night and the returns are quite good.

During the seasons, when the shrimp catches are not remunerative, trawlers from the above three centres migrate to other places. Likewise trawlers from other areas come to Mandapam during the peak prawn season particularly during the months of June-July.

Trawlers carry ice boxes to preserve their shrimp catches. Prawns are de-headed on-board itself and preserved in ice.

Boat beaching facilities are available at Mandapam, Pamban and Rameswaram. Boats can be repaired at the dry docks available here.

A decade ago prawn fishing was quite different from what is to-day. Gill netting for prawns is almost absent now. The Government gives loans and incentives to fishermen to own their boats. Due to the high cost of diesel and spare parts for the trawlers, the trawling is profitable only if the prawns are fished, as one kilogram of prawn cost Rs. 60-100. About 1800 metric tons of prawns are annually caught in these three Centres.

Prawns are readily purchased by the agents of the processing companies right on the beach and taken to the factories in insulated vans. To a large extent the prawns get fair prices. But some agents pay advance to boat owners and get their products at prefixed price.

PROCESSING

There are four well equipped processing and freezing plants in Mandapam area. They are Baby Marine, Private Ltd. George Majo Pillayada Fisheries and East Bay Fisheries. They collect prawns from various places and process them here.

Normally the frozen products are exported directly. Shipping is done either at Madras or Cochin. As the importing countries insist for non-contaminated products, cleanliness of high standards are prescribed in the processing plants. The workers must have uniform and head gear.

Prawns, thus frozen are inspected by Export Inspection Agencies for any bacterial contamination and then exported. They are frozen to -40°C. Bacterial analysis are made to find out if the harmful bacteria like *E. coli*, *Staphylococci*, *Salmonella*, *Vibrio cholerae* are present.

A minimum size of 90-110 counts (headless) are also accepted for export. All the above four freezing factories have around 15 ton freezing capacity each. As these companies are highly modernised with laboratory facilities, the Government has allowed pre-export self examination licence so that the companies can export without interference of Government agencies.

EXPORT

Mandapam area thus plays no mean role in the export market for prawns. India's Marine products export earnings have reached about 400 crore a year. 90% of the exported marine products is shrimp. Marine Products Export Development Authority, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India finds new overseas markets, by conducting exhibitions and giving incentives. Exporters keep close liaison with this authority for guidance.

Indian shrimps are exported to many countries including U. S. A., Japan, European countries, and Gulf countries. These countries conduct their own inspection and then only accept the consignment. This is a great risk exporters encounter. If the harmful bacteria are found, the consignment will be rejected causing financial loss to the exporting companies.