

Unprecedented trash fish landing at Mangalore Fisheries Harbour

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Trash fish landing at Mangalore Fisheries Harbour is mainly used for fish meal. The earlier practice was to take the trash to sandy areas near the sea and sun dry them. In the case of the catch brought by single day trawlers, the usual practice was to separate commercial groups from the entire catch and to sun dry the rest. During the year 2008, the average price of trash fish was Rs. 4/kg. Low value by-catch of multi-day operating vessels, pertaining to the last two days are brought to the shore for sun drying.

Bumper landing of oilsardine in 2007 lead to mushroom growth of fish oil plants and fish meal plants all along the coastline and the capacity of the existing plants was increased for boosting the production of fish oil and fish meal. However, since 2008, oilsardine catch is showing a reducing trend from 94,000 t in 2007 to 81,000 t in 2008. The data of 2009 also indicate a catch reduction of 20% compared to the previous year. This reduction in oilsardine landings resulted in a crisis wherein the fish meal plants found it difficult to meet the demand

for the raw material. Trash fish provided a viable alternative to oilsardine and multiday trawler operators who were already in an economic crisis decided to utilise this opportunity and started supplying trash fish for Rs. 8-10/kg. At present, multiday trawlers have started to carry the trash fish in their fish holds at an average rate of 2 t / trip from day one onwards. This trash fish in the trawlers is stored with minimum ice and is usually landed in a semi-rotten form. In the year 2009, trash fish formed 17% of the total landings and in 2008, it was only 13%. In the earlier years, the percentages was in single digits. The trash contained juveniles of all commercial species and the dominant groups were threadfin breams, flat heads and lizard fishes.

It has been observed that, the practice of buying trash fish from such trawlers was in vogue at Veraval Fishing Harbour of Gujarat state and some other fisheries harbours in the country for quite some time. Veraval Fishing Harbour and the surrounding areas have the characteristic stink because of the landed trash fish which was mostly in a semi-decomposed state. A similar crisis has arisen in the Mangalore City. Last year, most of the oilsardine landed at the harbour were transported through the city roads to the fish meal plants (Fig. 1 and 2). In view of the problems of hygiene, sanitation and upkeep of the city's aesthetic beauty, the municipal corporation has intervened and the purse-seiners were asked to land the oilsardines through sea route to the fish meal/ fish oil plants directly. This situation demands an amicable settlement wherein, there has to be an effective utilisation of the resources in terms of



Fig. 1. Trash fish landed by multiday operating trawlers loaded into truck for transportation to fishmeal plants



Fig. 2. Composition of trash fish landed at Mangalore by multiday trawlers

conservation of the biodiversity as well as contribution to the economy of the state, without having to compromise on health, hygiene and environment.