

Heavy landing of juveniles of lizardfish *Saurida undosquamis* (Richardson) at Visakhapatnam

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Andhra Pradesh has a coastline of 974 km and continental shelf area of 33,227 km. The annual marine fish landings of the state ranged from 2,08,305 to 2,33,900 t during 2006 to 2009 with an annual average landing of 2,22,928 t. Highest catch of 2,33,900 t was observed in 2009 and lowest of 2,08,305 t in the year 2007. Among the demersal resources, lizardfish is one of the dominant group. Lizardfish is sold and consumed in both fresh and dried condition at Visakhapatnam and is preferred by poor people as a protein supplement and also used in value added products. Lizardfish is locally called 'Badematta' and it supports a regular fishery. They are landed by both trawl nets and monofilamentous gillnets. Cod end mesh size of trawl net used to catch lizardfish is 15-20 mm. The annual average trawl catch of lizardfish of Andhra Pradesh during 2006-2009 was 2261 t with a range of 1,718-2,851 t contributing 1.1% of the total catch.

The annual catch of lizardfish in 2009 by monofilamentous gillnet was 194 t and by trawl 1,002 t contributing 1.9 % to total trawl by-catch at Visakhapatnam. *Saurida undosquamis* was the dominant species (43.1%) along with *Saurida tumbil* (33.3%), *Saurida micropectoralis* (13.2%), *Saurida*

longimanus (6.1%) and *Trachinocephalus myops* (4.3%). On 29th July, 2010 there was an unusually heavy landing of juveniles of *Saurida undosquamis* by both multiday and single day trawlers (Fig. 1). Trawlers at Visakhapatnam Fishing Harbour landed 4,110 kg of lizardfish, each individual boat landing about 5 to 470 kg. Ninety percent of the lizardfish were *Saurida undosquamis* juveniles. With a catch of 3,699 kg, the total number of *Saurida undosquamis* landed that day was 1,05,085 and 30 boats were operated and these were caught at a depth of 12-50 m. The size range of juveniles landed was 105 -190 mm and weight range 14 to 57 g. With 170-179 mm being the modal class, the mean size was 170 mm. Most of the fishes were females of stages I and II. The total landings of *Saurida undosquamis* juveniles at Visakhapatnam during 2006-2009 was in the range of 59-71% with mean being 65%. The length at first maturity of *S. undosquamis* is 240 mm (Rajkumar *et al.*, 2003). The analysis of the stomach contents revealed that 72% was semidigested fish, 23% was semidigested prawns and 5% was squid. Landing of juveniles on large scale is an unusual phenomenon and so far there were no landings of *Saurida undosquamis* in such magnitude at this fishing harbour. Commercial price of *Saurida undosquamis*

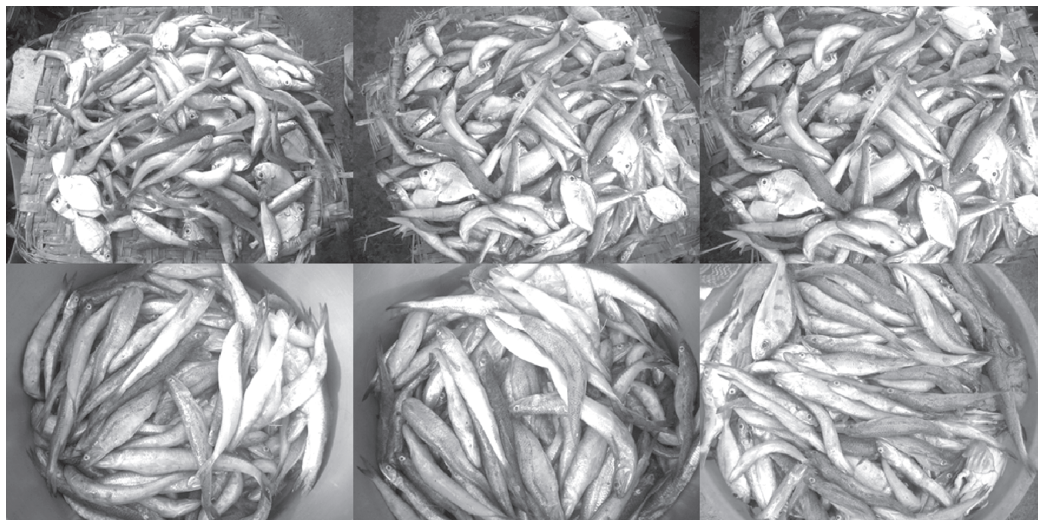


Fig. 1. Heavy landing of juvenile *Saurida undosquamis* at Visakhapatnam Fishing Harbour

juveniles ranged from Rs. 30 to 40 per kg. Landing of lizardfish juveniles to the tune of 90% of the total lizardfish catch in a day is a threat to the fishery and

management measures such as regulation of cod end mesh size of trawl net may be suggested to avoid harvesting of immature fish.