

# Cuttlefish fishery using FADs in Sothikuppam, Cuddalore District.

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Hand jigging by the artisanal fishermen for cuttle fish and squid is an important fishery along Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu. These jigs are operated to fish from open shoals and not practiced along Coromaondel Coast. However, a seasonal fishery for cuttlefish using jigs around Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) in Sothikuppam in Cuddalore district started some four years ago, and became more widely prevalent in 2020. These FADs are made using the branches of Casuarina plants. A big bundle comprising around 40-42 branches of casuarinas is used by one boat. A bag full of sand is attached to each branch as a weight and two to three plastic bottles of 1 litre capacity is attached to it as float. They are taken to the fishing ground and deployed with the help of GPS, in three to four places at a distance of around 15 to 20 m away from each other. The fishing grounds which are 10 to 15 km away from the shore where the depth varies from 10 to 12 m. According to the fishermen,

the aggregation starts after 3 to 4 days and the fishing starts after this. The fiberglass boat of 8 m OAL with 10 hp motor carries 4 to 5 fishermen for fishing. The jig resembles a shrimp with bright colours and hooks numbering around 18 in two rows are attached to the tail region. A small lead weight is also attached to the lower part of the lure near the eye. Each jig tied to a nylon rope is rolled on a wooden frame. The fishing is done usually during December- January months. They go for fishing by 5 AM and return after 2 PM and the fishing is near their own FADs only. There are around 42 units engaged in this fishing from here and each day 20 to 40 units go for fishing. The catch of cuttlefish in a unit varied from 30-85 kg and the landing centre price varied from ₹220-280 per kg. Though there is trawling in this area, so far there are no objections either from the trawlers or from any other group.



Fig.1. FAD stacked in the boat



Fig.2. Jigs used by fishers



Fig.3. Cuttlefish catch landed