

# On the hook and line fishery of seerfish, *Scomberomorus commerson* (Lancepede, 1801)

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*Scomberomorus commerson* is commonly known as 'Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel'. It is known as 'Towar', 'Iswan' or 'Anjari' in Maharashtra. A good quantity of this species, weighing around three tonnes, was caught (on one day (18.9.2007) by hooks and lines operated from fibreglass boats and these were landed at New Ferry Wharf, Mumbai. In addition to these, about 200 kg of tuna were also landed. The entire catch was auctioned at the landing centre itself, fetching a total Rs. 2,25,000. The Unit sale price per kg was Rs. 75/- The price fetched was comparatively on the lower side because of Ganesh Chaturthi the time.

The hooks and lines were operated by six fibreglass boats at 30 km north of Mumbai at a depth of 30-40 m. Each of these boats, having over all length of 14 m each fitted with two cylinder 32 HP, IBM engines, had four crew members. Locally made hooks of No.4 were used with sardines as bait. The entire fishing was carried out during early hours of the day and the operation lasted for 5-6 hrs. The catch was carried ashore by a single carrier boat (gill netter), stored in crushed ice and

unloaded at New Ferry Wharf for marketing.

Length measurements of 53 of the specimens caught were taken and it was observed that the total length of each ranged between 50-93 cm with a mode at 70-79 cm (Fig 1). The weight of each fish ranged between 5 to 14 kg.

Hook and line fishing is emerging as an alternate fishing system as *dol* net operations are incurring losses due to lower returns. Hook and lines are operated from fibreglass boats, each of which costs only rupees four lakhs including the engine, while the *dol* netters require an approximate investment of about Rs. 10-12 lakhs. These fibre boats are owned by the local fishermen from Worli, Uttan, Mahim etc. and they employ on monthly wages crew from south India, mostly from Kanyakumari. These crewmen specialise in hook and line fishing. Hook and line fishing is commercially viable because expenses per trip are comparatively less, while the returns from sale of fish caught will be good. Generally, these hook and line fishermen unload the catches at their respective landing centers. However,

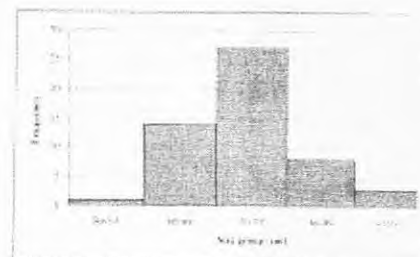


Fig.1: Length frequency of *Scomberomorus commerson* landed at N.F.W by hook and lines

whenever the catches are very good like the present one, they unload them at New Ferry Wharf or Sasoon Dock so as to get a better price.

Fishermen's co-operative societies at Worli, Uttan, Mahim etc. have taken interest in this alternate fishery and encourage their members by helping them to secure financial help from co-operative banks. Generally, the fishes caught by hook and line are mainly sharks, rays, skates, catfishes, eels, tunas etc. However, sudden catch of seerfish by hand operated hook and line from nearshore area has generated interest among fishermen and fish merchants.