

Revival of *Rampani* fishing for mackerel in Maharashtra

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A characteristic shore seine fishery is practised along southern Maharashtra, Goa and northern Karnataka region mainly for catching Indian mackerel *Rastrelliger kanagurta*. The mackerel shoals occurring close to shores during post monsoon season from November to January are spotted by the experts among the fishing community and caught with the shore seine popularly known as *Rampani*. The net is operated from the beach by means of a boat laying the net in semicircular manner, consequent to which both ends of the hauling ropes are pulled simultaneously on to the beach. About 50-80 people are needed for operation of the net so that the process of shooting and hauling is carried out as fast as possible. The net can be operated only in shallow, calm waters where sea bottom is smooth.

The estimated total landings of mackerel in Maharashtra during 2005 to 2014 shows an increasing trend up to year 2011 and thereafter a decrease. The catch of mackerel landed by purse seine recorded spectacular increase from 1593 t in 2005 to 21575 t in 2011 and in gill nets from 1592 t in 2005 to 5835 t in 2010. *Rampani* net operations were very limited until 2005 when only around 12 t of mackerel was landed. In 2011, *Rampani* operations in Sindhudurg district landed 1364 t and thereafter in 2014, highest landing of 1523 t was recorded. During the same period landings of mackerel by trawl net remained steady at around 1600 t. Due to the unprecedented abundance of mackerel, many trawlers were converted into purse seiners by fitting drum winch and other accessories in addition to the net during this time.

During the post monsoon period, abundance of



Landings of Mackerel in *Rampani* net

mackerel off Ratnagiri in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra was very high and around 70-80 *Rampani* net operators were busy fishing for mackerel. Mackerel landings ranged from 2 to 6 t at Devbag and Wairi landing centres. The mackerel catch from *Rampani* fishing in Sindhudurg district was 3.5 t during November 2014 to January 2015. Price of mackerel at landing centres was low at ₹ 10 -15 per kg while the same in retail market was up to ₹ 80 per kg. Such activity among Rampankars or mackerel fishery along the southern coast of Maharashtra was seen after a gap of many years. For the past few years, purse seiners from Goa were reported to be operating in coastal waters of southern Maharashtra and therefore *Rampani* fishery was defunct. From 2010 onwards, strict implementation of Monsoon Fishing Ban from June to August was observed in Maharashtra. The revival of the *Rampani* fishery was attributed by the fishermen to this ban. However, the extension of mackerel even to the northern districts of Maharashtra and further towards Gujarat coast could also be due to the high cyclic abundance of the species, as observed in the past.