

Heavy landings of juveniles of Indian scad, *Decapterus russelli* at Munambam Fisheries Harbour

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Among the carangid fishes, the Indian scad, *Decapterus russelli* is an important pelagic fish and a major commercial species contributing to the marine fisheries of Kerala. The fish is locally called “kozhuchala” and it forms a regular fishery. The species is often caught as by-catch in shrimp trawl nets having cod-end mesh sizes ranging from 15 mm to 20 mm that is operated in the depth range of 55-90 m almost throughout the year. They are consumed fresh as well as sun dried form. Recently, it is also being used as a raw material for production of fish meal. Usually fish of 15 cm total length and an average weight of 50 g are represented in the

commercial catches. But, unusual heavy landings of juveniles of *Decapterus russelli* were observed in the months of November and December 2014, at Munambam Fishing Harbour, Kochi. These juvenile scads had a size range of 7 - 8 cm total length and weighed between 10-15 g. Such heavy exploitation of *D. russelli* was mainly due to high demand by the fish meal industry for the preparation of fish meal. The resource is already under considerable fishing pressure and unsustainable fishing practices that are not curbed will adversely affect the fishery recruitment process. This can affect the volume of marine fish landings in the near future.