

Heavy landing of lesser sardines juveniles

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The juveniles of lesser sardines (*Sardinella gibbosa* and *Sardinella albella*) locally known as 'chala' were landed heavily at Soliakudi Landing Centre by trawl net after the seasonal fishing ban (April 16 - May 31) ended. Landings of juvenile lesser sardines were noticed during entire month of June 2016 in shrimp trawlers (OAL 10-11 m with 110-188 hp engine) operating at Soliakudi, fishing upto 14 m depths and covering a distance of 8-12 km from the shore. The trawl net has a head rope of length 350 m with a stretched mesh size of 40, 25 and 15 mm at the wings, belly and cod end respectively. They start from shore by 16 00 hours and return next day morning by 07 00 hours with landings

continuing upto 10 00 hours. About 3 to 3.5 tonnes (t) of juveniles were landed by each trawler. Around 30-35 trawlers were operating from the base. During June 2016, an estimated 120 t of juveniles of lesser sardines of 32-85 mm size was landed along with shrimp and other commercial fishes. Almost 80% of the juvenile sardine catch was 30-50 mm sized which were sold at the rate of ₹ 10-15 per kg. The catch was packed off to a fish meal factory after drying. The same sardine species landed by gillnets are bigger (125-155 mm sized) and sold at the rate of ₹ 50-60 per kg. Any excessive exploitation of juvenile sardine will be detrimental to the fishery in the long run.