

Note on the unusual landings of *Amblygaster sirm* off Vizhinjam coast

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Unusual landings of the clupeid *Amblygaster sirm* (spotted sardinella), was noticed during the October - December 2016 along the Vizhinjam coast. Locally known as Keerichala, regular landings of *A. sirm* was observed in all the major landing centres along the Thiruvananthapuram coast like Mampally, Anjengo, Perumathura, Thazhampally, Marianad, Valiyathura, Poonthura etc. Chalavala, Thattumadi (boat seine) and ring seine were the major gears used for the fishery. The fishery was supported by juveniles and adults whose average size ranged from

16.5 cm to 21.8 cm in total length (TL). The gonadal examination revealed that most of the fishes were in maturing and fully matured condition. Highly perishable but fresh catch of *A. sirm* fetched a price range of ₹ 70-110 per kg in domestic market while the damaged ones were taken for feed industry at the rate of about ₹ 300 per basket of approximately 30 kg each. Fishermen from the landing centres like Thazhampally and Perumathura, mostly operated ring seines with the average catch of the species per day around 600 kg. The boat seine operations

got an average catch of 300-350 kg per day. Only small quantities of this species were reported earlier from this coast. But in 2016 in certain landing centres, catch up to 1.6 tonnes per boat per day was recorded. The fishery of *A. sirm* along the south of Kerala coast is seasonal and occurs during the post monsoon months. The catch comprised of several species of clupeids among which 30-40% was constituted by *A. sirm*.

Ring seines were normally single day operations commencing at 04.00 am. Usually two or three carrier boats were associated with ring seine operations to land the catch without much quality

loss. The mother boats with an overall length of 14-16m length with 90 HP outboard motor of 20 m OAL with 280 HP inboard engine on an average had 24 and 36 crew members respectively.

Local fishermen opined that, this is the first time such a profuse quantity of *A. sirm* is being along with consistently landed here a decline in the oil sardine (*Sardinella longiceps*) landings during this season. The local fish-sellers opined that, due to the non-availability of oil sardine, consumers who specifically preferred small fresh fishes chose *A. sirm* due to the fresh condition of the fish landed.