

Heavy landing of juveniles of threadfin breams

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Threadfin breams are a commercially important group of marine fishes in India. *Nemipterus randalli* locally known as 'kilimeen' or 'Puthiyaplakora' is the most abundant species contributing 53.5 % of threadfin bream landings in Kerala. A fisheries resources assessment survey was conducted at seven landing centers viz., Cochin fisheries harbour, Munambam fisheries harbour, Munambam mini harbour, Kalamukku, Chellanam, Murikkumpadam and Fort Kochi landing centers for three months

during December 2016 - February 2017. Sizeable landings of juvenile fishes were noticed at all the landing centres with a high occurrence at the Munambam mini harbour. Juvenile landings at this centre were confined mainly to *Nemipterus randalli* caught by multiday trawlers, operating at depth range of 60-150 m. The duration of the fishing of multiday trawlers operating from these centers varies from 5 to 15 days. The overall length of the crafts were 13-18 meters with engine of 110 HP to

411 HP. An average of 3 hauls per day that may take around 2 to 2.5 h of trawling operation was reported by the fishers.

The fish is sold locally in fresh condition for ₹ 70-80 per kg at the landing centres. It also has high export value as it is used for the preparation of value-added products like surimi, kamaboko, sausages etc. Usually the landing of this fish peaks during the month of August when the trawlers venture into the sea after the monsoon ban. The juveniles of this species are locally called as 'pottankili', with size varying from 4 - 8 cm. It may be mentioned here that the Minimum Legal Size (MLS) of capture implemented by Government of Kerala for *Nemipterus randalli* is 10 cm TL (total length). The huge demand for the juvenile fishes as a major input to the fertilizer and fish meal plants is the main reason for harvesting large quantities of juveniles of this species.

The estimated economic loss calculated due to the juvenile landing of *Nemipterus randalli* during December 2016 to February 2017 at the Munambam mini harbour using a bio-economic model is presented in Table 1. Most of the juvenile fishes were transported to Mangalore in Karnataka and sold to fertilizer and fish meal plants for ₹ 30-35 per kg. The juveniles exploited are the new recruits in the fishery and hence their indiscriminate exploitation will be disastrous to the fishery in the long run.

Table 1. Estimated economic loss due to juvenile fishing of *Nemipterus randalli* at Munambam mini harbor

Months	December 2016	January 2017	February 2017
Juvenile landing (in tonnes)	295.86	912.83	381.41
Estimated economic loss (₹ in lakhs)	80.91	249.65	104.31