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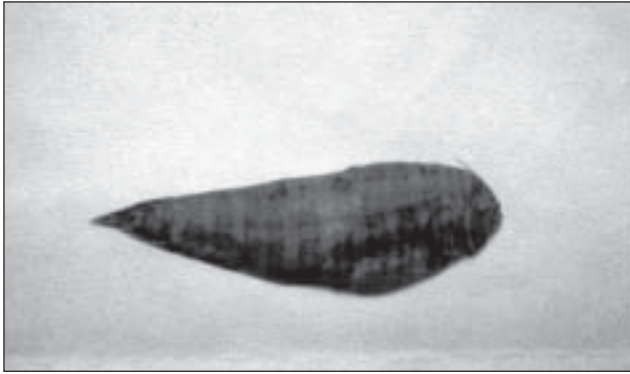
CENTRAL MARINE FISHERIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

COCHIN, INDIA

(INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH)

First record of unicorn sole, *Aesopia cornuta* (Kaup,1858) along the Malabar coast

Flatfishes are very important demersal fishery resources contributing 4% of the trawl landings along the Malabar coast. They are highly relished table fishes in fresh and



Aesopia cornuta (Kaup, 1858) landed along Malabar coast

dried condition along this region. Flatfishes of the family cynoglossidae support the commercial flatfish fishery of Malabar region, but the occurrence of flat fish of the family soleidae is not common. In May,2003 a few specimens of unicorn sole, *Aesopia cornuta*, belonging to the family soleidae were observed in the trawl landings at Beypore by the multi day vessels operated off Malabar coast at a depth of 120 m. This benthic species has not been recorded so far from this region.

The distinguishing character of this species is that it is brown in colour with 14-16 dark bands edged with black, with some pale spots. Body scales are smooth.

Pectoral fins small with 12-16 soft rays. Dorsal and anal fin rays branched. First dorsal ray thickened and elongated. Caudal fin completely joined with dorsal and anal fin, caudal rays 14-16. Ventral fin separated from anal and genital papilla, each with soft rays. Lateral line scales are counted from above upper end

of gill opening to base of caudal fin. Scales are smooth and cycloid. Both eyes are on right side of head. Dorsal fin originates before eyes. No fin spines. The specimens measured 109 to 160 mm and weighed 18 to 35 g.

Reported by : P.P. Manojkumar and P.P. Pavithran, Calicut Research Centre of CMFRI, Calicut