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PRICE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMERCIALY IMPORTANT SPECIES OF PRAWNS AT MANGALORE*

Introduction

The mechanised trawling has received considerable importance in the last decade due to the increasing demand for prawns by the export industry. Even though prawns contribute less than 13.0% of the annual average trawl catch, they realise upto 75.0% of the return in value. Due to this, trawl fishery has been largely dependant on the availability of prawns. In other words, the maximum trawling activity could be observed when peak catches of prawns are available. Though data on catch, effort and biological parameters are being collected on a regular basis, no such data are available on the price structure of prawns of this area. The urgent need to monitor the price structure of commercially important prawns on a regular basis, has been felt for quite some time, since such information is highly essential for the better evaluation and judicious exploitation of this valuable resource. An account on the price structure of the commercially important species of prawns of Mangalore area during 1980-'86 is given in this article.

Commercial species of prawns and their mode of auction

The trawl fishery is largely supported by smaller species like *Metapenaeus dobsoni* and *Parapenaeopsis stylifera*. In addition, larger varieties like *Metapenaeus monoceros*, *M. affinis*, *Penaeus indicus* and *P. monodon* occur in fairly good quantities during certain months of the year.

In the case of boats operating during day, generally the prawn catch is sorted out species-wise and kept in separate baskets before they return to the shore. But the boats operating during night bring their catches in iced condition. As soon as the boat is landed, the prawn catch is taken out and auctioned species-wise by The South Kanara District Co-operative Fish Marketing Federation, Mangalore, to fix the rate per kg, provided the unit is financed by it. If the catch is poor, it is auctioned as a lot. The rate fixed for a particular species at an auction is applicable to the concerned catch only. Now-a-days a good number of boats are financed by private parties who in turn take the entire prawn

Table 1. The price structure (Rs. per kg) during a six year period along with the months of highest and lowest rates for each species of prawns at Mangalore

Year		<i>M. dobsoni</i>	<i>P. stylifera</i>	<i>M. monoceros</i>	<i>M. affinis</i>	<i>P. indicus</i>	<i>P. monodon</i>
1980-'81	Max.	14.40	10.20	26.40	—	40.00	
	Min.	10.90	5.50	23.00	23.00	17.00	S
		(December)			(January)		
1981-'82	Max.	16.50	18.00	30.75	—	71.00	58.00
	Min.	13.00	7.70	26.00	—	32.50	42.50
			(January)				(November)
1982-'83	Max.	20.00	12.90	39.00	38.00	76.00	85.00
	Min.	11.50	5.00	33.20	—	62.00	€8.00
			(May)		(May)		
1983-'84	Max.	19.00	14.00	49.00	—	65.00	71.70
	Min.	10.00	9.40	36.00	—	21.00	61.00
1984-'85	Max.	20.00	11.70	40.00	—	65.00	74.00
	Min.	15.50	8.10	21.00	—	18.00	54.00
						(December)	
1985-'86	Max.	21.60	17.00	59.00	—	89.30	87.50
	Min.	19.10	15.30	38.00	—	65.00	81.85
		(March)		(March)		(March)	(March)

*Prepared by K. K. Sukumaran, Mangalore Research Centre of CMFRI, Mangalore.

catch at a rate slightly lower than the rate fixed by the Federation.

Since there is considerable demand, the price of prawns shows an upward trend season after season. Generally the price for different category of prawns is regulated by the export industry depending on the demand in the foreign market. It is seen that the auctioning rates are always lower than the prices offered by the industry. Slight fluctuations noticed in the rates of a particular species may be attributed to the relative sizes and freshness of the lot auctioned.

Price structure for different species of prawns

The auctioning rates vary from species to species. Even within the species, marginal variations have been observed in the auctioning rates of the catches landed by different boats on the same day. The price structure during a six year period along with the months of

highest and lowest rates for each species of prawns at Mangalore is given in Table 1.

General remarks

It is well known that there is correlation among demand, supply and cost of any commercial product. In the case of prawns, on the otherhand, since the supply is always short of demand, the fluctuation in catch has little influence on the price. Moreover, prawns, being an export commodity, prices are always high. Generally exporters decide the maximum price of each species during a particular period. Due to this, any fall or increase in foreign demand will be directly reflected in the local price.

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