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Reappearance of oil sardine along the Tuticorin coast*

The oil sardine, *Sardinella longiceps* forms 10 to 18% of total fish landings in India although it is caught mostly from the west coast. Sporadic catches of oil sardine have been occasionally reported from some places along the east coast as well.

Usually only few tonnes of oil sardines are landed every year at Tuticorin. But in 1995, 77 tonnes of oil sardines were landed after a full lapse of three years. Though a good landing of oil sardine has been recorded at Mandapam area in the beginning of 1992 as reported in MFIS - No. 117, no catch was observed in Tuticorin coast in the same or subsequent years except for some quantity landed in November 1993. However, in 1995 during August - October the oil sardine reappeared in great abundance along this coast (Table 1).

The specimens measured from 12.5 to 15.2 cm in total length. The dominant size groups were 12.5, 13.5 and 14.0 cm. Females dominated forming 70.7% while the males amounted to 8.6% and indeterminates 20.7%. Regarding sexual maturity

36.2% of them were in the resting stages, 27.6% were found to be in the III and IV stages of maturity. Immature accounted for 15.5%.

The entire catch was packed with ice and transported to Kerala to get a better price. The whole-



Fig. 1. The catches of oil sardine ready for auction.

TABLE 1. Estimated fishing effort (No. of units) and catch (kg) of oil sardine at Tuticorin during 1990 - '95 (Catch per unit in parenthesis)

	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994		1995		Total catch
	Catch	Units	Catch	Units	Catch	Units	Catch	Units	Catch	Units	Catch	Units	
Jan.	-	-	21,349 (81.5)	262	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,349
Feb.	-	-	12,008 (6.9)	1,752	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,008
Mar.	-	-	3,171 (5.3)	598	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,171
Apr.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Nil
May	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Nil
Jun.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Nil
Jul.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Nil
Aug.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,900 (2.0)	1,924	3,900
Sept.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	63,570 (29.7)	2,144	63,570
Oct.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,425 (3.9)	2,444	9,425
Nov.	7,711 (2.2)	3,518	-	-	-	-	3,325 (1.2)	1,694	-	-	-	-	11,036
Dec.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Nil
Total	7,711 (2.2)	3,518	36,528 (13.9)	2,612	Nil	-	3,325 (1.2)	1,694	Nil	-	76,895 (11.8)	6,512	124,459

sale price at Tuticorin was only Rs. 7 per kg. as the oil sardine is not consumed locally.

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