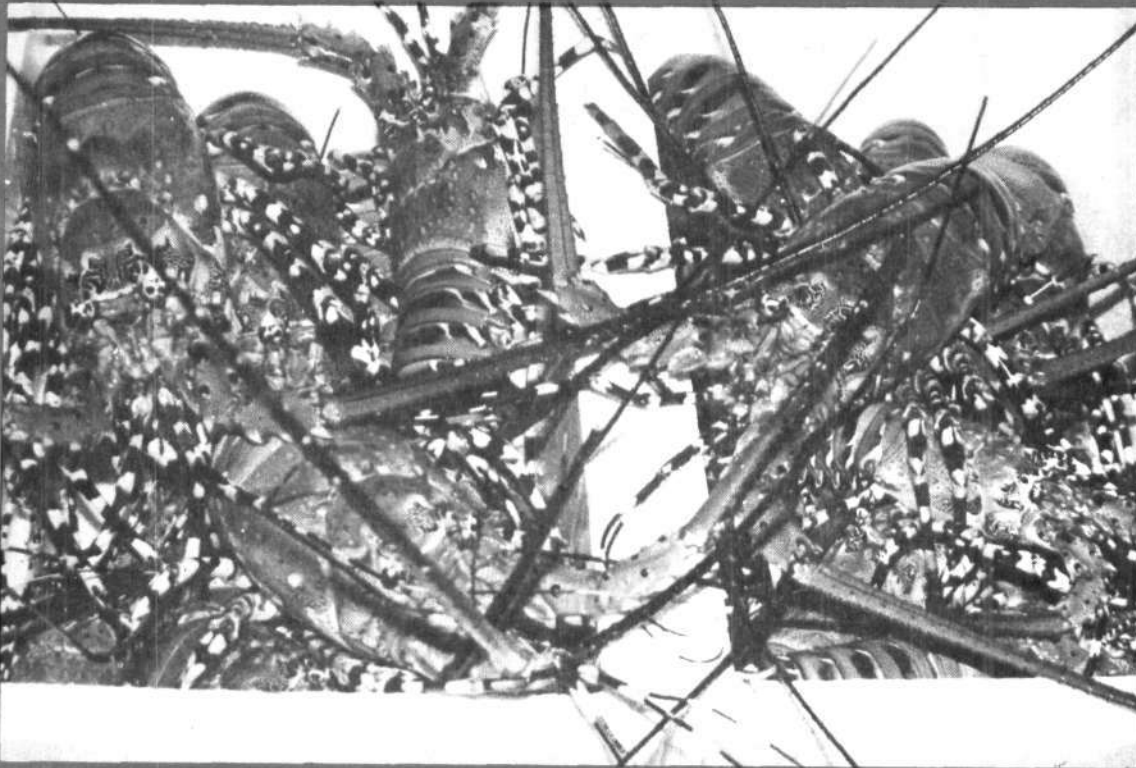




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INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

LIVE LOBSTER EXPORT FROM TUTICORIN*

The shrimp has long maintained a prominent role in seafood export market in India. Along with frozen shrimp meat, spiny lobster meat also is exported. The success of their export is a testimony to consumer demand for frozen and canned seafood products. Major inhibiting factors in the export of shrimp and lobster meat include strict quality control norms adopted by the consumer countries. Consumers also are given little choice of recipe and dish selection. Recent popularity of microwave oven has added a new dimension in the export of spiny lobster in live condition to some overseas markets. Consumers could buy live lobsters and make their own tasty foods in a short time instead of going for frozen or cooked foods from abroad. Taking this advantage some export houses have set up facilities to send spiny lobsters alive to overseas markets in Hongkong and Singapore.

Average annual production of spiny lobsters in India is around 2,000 tonnes and this is inadequate to meet the increasing demand in the internal and export market. About 1,663 tonnes of cooked lobster and lobster tails were exported in 1988-'89.

Three seafood export houses in Tuticorin started exporting live spiny lobster of the species *Panulirus homarus* and *P. ornatus* to Hongkong and Singapore from 1990 onwards. Overseas importers supplied technical information and



Fig. 1. Graded spiny lobsters.



Fig. 2. Live spiny lobsters ready for packing.

training to keep the lobsters alive till they reach their destination. Because of export competition the exporters at Tuticorin, neither tell about their packaging technique nor allow photographing their equipments. The Marine Products Export Development Authority has given some information of packaging live lobster for export in their extension publication No. 6.

Live spiny lobsters caught at nearby fishing centres are brought to Tuticorin. Wet straw or saw dust is used to keep the lobster alive. They are weighed and kept in syntex tanks in clean sea water. Some times salt added fresh water is used. Water temperature and salinity are checked and maintained. Regular aeration is done. Dead lobsters are removed and sold for meat. Live lobsters are packed in thermocole box containers

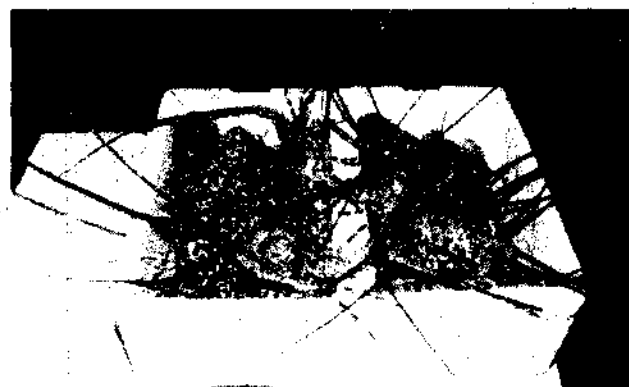


Fig. 3. Some of the lobsters made ready for export.

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without water, each box containing not more than 10 kg of lobsters. These boxes are sent to packing houses in Madras normally in the evening to avoid day heat by Train or fast moving buses. Conditioning the live lobsters for export is done at Madras. Healthy live lobsters are transported by air to overseas markets in Hongkong and Singapore. Live lobsters from 250 g to 3.5 kg are

accepted for export. The purchase price range from Rs. 250 to Rs. 400 per kg of live lobster. Eventhough live lobsters are exported throughout the year, peak season is from June to August and from December to January. During the peak season 300 to 500 kg of spiny lobster are sent from Tuticotin every day.