

FISHERIES OF THE WEST COAST OF INDIA

*Published on the occasion of the opening of the new building
of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Sub-Station at
Calicut by Shri. M. V. Krishnappa, Union Deputy
Minister for Agriculture, on 1st October 1958*



Edited by
Dr. S. JONES
*Chief Research Officer, Central Marine Fisheries Research Station
Mandapam Camp*

DEEP SEA FISHING

BY K. CHIDAMBARAM, M.A., F.Z.S.

*Assistant Fisheries Development Adviser to the Government of India
Ministry of Food and Agriculture, New Delhi*

FISHING in the seas bordering India is at present largely confined to a coastal belt of about 7-10 miles in width. Though fishing is carried on to a small extent in distant parts of the sea, bulk of the marine fish landings are from inshore waters. The indigenous crafts and gear employed by Indian fishermen, though well suited for fishing in these areas, do not meet the needs of fishing in distant and deeper waters. It was, no doubt, realised that though production of fish could be increased to some extent by developing inland fishing, large proportion of increased landings should come only from the seas.

Deep sea fishing, fishing in offshore and distant parts of the high seas for surface, midwater and bottom forms, is to be carried on along two main lines:—

- (i) by increasing the range and duration of the existing operations by installing engines in fishing boats, suitable for mechanisation; and
- (ii) by undertaking exploratory fishing with the object of introducing new methods.

Since 1902, occasional attempts have been made at offshore and deep sea fishing in Indian seas for conducting surveys and commercial fishing by large-sized trawlers. These resulted in the location of some important fishing grounds off the coasts of India and Ceylon, but did not prove commercially successful because of the high cost of maintenance of the vessels, lack of adequate knowledge of the fishing grounds, lack of trained personnel, lack of information on the suitability of different types of vessels for Indian conditions, lack of harbour facilities, etc.

Since the end of last war, considerable emphasis has been laid on the development of deep sea fishing to augment the fish supplies of the country. The Government of India established a Pilot Deep Sea Fishing Station at Bombay in 1946 with the object of charting fishing grounds, determining fishing seasons and fishing intensities, assessing suitability of different kinds of fishing craft, gear and methods under Indian conditions, carrying out

experiments on methods of preservation of fish, training of Indian personnel in powered fishing methods, and in general, for undertaking work that would lead to the development of commercial offshore fishing in India.

Exploratory offshore fishing was conducted from 1948 onwards with trawlers for bottom fishing and with Reekie boats for midwater and surface fishing. So far more than 17,000 sq. miles of sea have been surveyed and charted off the coasts of Bombay and Saurashtra. The exploratory surveys have indicated the richness of fishing grounds in certain regions and also the seasons of abundance of important food fishes in those grounds. In 1953, the two other trawlers belonging to the Government of India were converted for 'bull trawling' operations. Very encouraging results have been achieved by this type of fishing, as a result of which an Indo-Japanese concern has commenced commercial fishing with two pairs of bull trawlers and have proved successful.

On the east coast, the Government of India had not so far undertaken any comprehensive survey on deep sea fishing. The Government of Madras made a preliminary survey on deep sea fishing between 1927 and 1930 with one trawler. The West Bengal Government established a Deep Sea Fishing Station at Calcutta and surveys of the fishing grounds at the head of the Bay of Bengal were being conducted since 1950 by two other trawlers. Three bull trawlers were procured for that State under the T.C.M. programme.

Under the Second Five-Year Plan, it has been proposed to expand the activities of the Deep Sea Fishing Station, Bombay, and establish offshore fishing Stations at Cochin on the west coast and Tuticorin and Visakhapatnam on the east coast. All the power fishing vessels procured under T.C.M. programme are being pooled for operation from the four centres. The Offshore Fishing Station at Cochin was established in February 1957 by moving the two cutters, *Ashok* and *Praja* and the shrimp trawler, *Durga*. Recently this fleet has been strengthened. The programme of exploratory and experimental fishing at Cochin has been closely co-ordinated with the work of the fishing schooners of the Indo-Norwegian Project.

The offshore fishing unit at Tuticorin has begun to function in June 1958 under the Government of India. The fleet will be strengthened by transferring some of the power fishing vessels from the west coast.

The development of deep sea fishing does not end with increasing fish production; it raises several other vital problems requiring simultaneous attention. Safe anchorage for mechanised boats and large vessels, ice and

cold storage facilities, transport from landing centres to centres of consumption, organisation of marketing, training of personnel, etc., are some of the most important factors to be considered in developing deep sea fishing. Facilities are provided for the training of personnel on board the offshore fishing vessels of the Government of India, Government of West Bengal, and of the Indo-Norwegian Project. The Central Fisheries Technological Research Station, recently established, is undertaking investigations relating to the improvement of fishing gear. Ice and cold storage plants exist now in some of the important fish-landing centres. Two harbour specialists have completed the survey in the States of Bombay, Mysore, Kerala and Madras for recommending suitable centres to develop small-scale fishing harbours. Facilities provided under the foreign aid programmes are being taken advantage of to train fishermen for shore management, distribution and marketing of fish.

The importance of survey and exploration of fishing grounds, provision of facilities for handling and storage, quick turn around of the vessels, training of local personnel, marketing facilities, etc., has been clearly indicated during the trawling operations of the vessels in different periods since the war. The Indo-Japanese fishing company, New India Fisheries, Ltd., has successfully demonstrated during the last two years the potentiality of the fishing grounds off the Bombay coasts. Certain proposals for the establishment of fishing companies by Indian enterprise in collaboration with foreign interests are also under consideration by the Government of India. The integrated programmes of development on hand for offshore and deep sea fishing, offshore fishery research and investigations on fishing gear, fish processing and handling would lead to increasing the range of fishing operations to the distant and deeper waters off the Indian coasts and contribute towards increasing the fish production of our country.