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THE DEMERSAL
FISHERIES OF SRI LANKA

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THE DEMERSAL
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This paper attempts to review the results of all the demersal fishery surveys carried out in Sri Lanka in the past, and to reassess the current status of demersal stocks in the light of the present level of exploitation. This is seen as a first step towards identifying development possibilities, management measures for demersal resources, and areas requiring future investigation.

The investigations for this paper were carried out during 1982 by the small-scale fisheries project of BOBP (Bay of Bengal Programme) in active cooperation with NARA (National Aquatic Resources Agency).

The paper sets out conclusions about the most productive belt for valuable resources, peak seasons, and the level of surplus yield. It suggests that the demersal fishery in the shelf area should be developed as a small-scale fishery, because rapid exploitation may destroy the resource. Development should be on an areawise basis, and capital investment based on surplus yield levels in each area. A combination of fishing methods will be needed to fish the entire exploitable potential in most areas. Besides the bottom trawl, passive methods should be encouraged.

The paper also evaluates the status of Sri Lanka's demersal fishery, on the basis of a field survey at major fish landing sites over a period of two weeks in September 1982, conducted by 12 staff members of NARA; and on the basis of statistics compiled by the Ministry of Fisheries. The paper gives rough estimates of catch and catch rates, species composition and annual demersal production in Sri Lanka.

The BOBP's experimental work on tapping Sri Lanka's demersal resources is reported in other papers. BOBP/WP/6, BOBP/WP/16, and BOBP/WP/40 describe the findings of experiments with bottom longlines. Papers describing experimental work with fish traps and high-opening bottom trawls are under preparation.

The small-scale fisheries project of the Bay of Bengal Programme began in 1979 and covers five countries bordering the Bay of Bengal – Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Funded by SIDA (Swedish International Development Authority) and executed by the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), the project seeks to develop, demonstrate and promote appropriate technologies and methodologies to improve the conditions of small-scale fisherfolk in member countries.

This document is a working paper and has not been officially cleared by the Government concerned or by the FAO.

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