

SMALL PELAGIC FISHERIES IN WEST AND SOUTH COASTS
OF SRI LANKA

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This paper analyses the fisheries carried out for small pelagic varieties in Western and Southern coasts of Sri Lanka, an area extending from Chilaw to Kirinda. The fishery was sampled fortnightly at 15 major fish landing sites during the year 1985.

Small mesh gillnets, beach seines and purse seines were the main gear involved in the production of small pelagic varieties. While gill nets were used throughout the year, use of purse seines and beach seines was seasonal and limited to non monsoonal months. The purse seine had recorded a mean catch per unit effort (CPUE) of 246 kg/operation, whereas the CPUE in the beach seine fishery was about 83 kg/haul and that of small mesh gill net fishery varied from 6.75 kg to 78.7 kg/operation depending on craft area and season of operation.

The estimated total annual production of small pelagic fish in the study area by these three gear was about 25,000 MT for the year 1985, and accounted for about 38% of the total small pelagic fish production of the island. The contributions by the small mesh gill nets, beach seines and purse seines to this total production were 90%, 8% and 2% respectively.

Sardinella sirm dominated the catches of small mesh gill nets and purse seines. Other shallow water species such as Stolephorus spp. (Anchovies) and Leiognathus spp. (Silver bellies) were the major contributors to the beach seine catches.