

Catch analysis of *Genus pagellus* in the South-Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea

W.F. WADIE, A.S. AL-DAHABY, S.S. EL-SERAFY and S.I. RISKALLA

National Institute of Oceanography & Fisheries, Kayed Bey, ALEXANDRIA (Egypt)
Zoology Department, Faculty of Science, Zazazig University (Egypt)

Genus *Pagellus* is represented in the Egyptian Mediterranean waters by *Pagellus erythrinus* and *Pagellus acarne*. In spite of their small contribution to the total catch, they are comprised among the most commercially important species due to their higher dietetic values. *Pagellus* sp. are usually accompanied by a few *Pagrus* species. Trawling fisheries contribute about 50% of the total Mediterranean catch in the last decade. The present work deals with the analysis, distribution and monthly variation of *Pagellus* catch. This study is based on data collected from 149 trawling operations carried out along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast during the period from 1986 to 1988.

Catch analysis revealed that families *Centracanthidae*, *Mullidae* and *Sparidae* made up respectively the 29.8; 20.2 and 14.9% of the total catches. *Pagellus erythrinus* and *Boops boops* formed 67.9 and 12.9% of the total *sparidae* catch respectively. The average total fish landings could be distinguished in four periods. The first one is before damming of the Nile River (1962-1964) which is characterised by relatively low catch (1.85% of the total) and explained by the fact that sardine fisheries constituted about the 48% of the total Mediterranean catch before damming. The increase in *Pagellus* catch to 3.9% in the second period (after damming (1965-1967) is related to damming which markedly affected the sardine production (7% of the total Mediterranean catch). During the third period (1968-1977), the average annual catch amounted to 6.4% of the total which can be explained by reduced fishing activity due to the Middle East conflict, followed by a sharp decline of the total Mediterranean yield. In the fourth period (1978-1986) *Pagellus* catch amounted to 3.3%, which could be attributed to the introduction of purse seine that proved itself as an efficient method for obtaining the largest possible quantities of sardine and other pelagic fishes.

Distribution and monthly variation of *Pagellus* catch revealed that *Pagellus* production in front of the Delta was minimum before 1965 (8.7% of the total). Increasing considerably during three successive periods and attaining its maximum value during the last period (42.5% of the total). This increase could be attributed to higher salinity of the sea water in front of the Delta.

There are two peaks in the *Pagellus* catch, the first one occurred during the periods (1962-1964) and (1978-1986) in April and May (spawning season of *Pagellus erythrinus*) and the second is observed in the fourth period in October (appearance of *Pagellus erythrinus* juveniles in large quantities).

Maximum catch of *Pagellus erythrinus* was obtained in May (98.7% of the total), while that of *Pagellus acarne* (10.8% of the total) occurred in November (spawning season).