

4. Lesson 4

Asian sea bass

4.1 Introduction

The Asian sea bass *Lates calcarifer* is a prime value fish grown for luxury markets. It is commonly distributed in Australia, Myanmar, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. This fish can grow in freshwater, brackish water and marine waters. In India it forms a by catch in the traditional shrimp filtration fields. This fish is grown in large scale in Singapore and Taiwan in sea cages.

Distinctive characters

Lates calcarifer belongs to the family Centropomidae. It has an elongated and compressed body, with a deep caudal peduncle. Head is pointed with a concave dorsal profile, becoming convex in front of the dorsal fin. Mouth is large, slightly oblique and the lower edge of the opercle is serrated, with a strong spine.

The spinuous and the soft parts of the dorsal fin are separated by a deep notch. The lateral line extends on to the tail. In juveniles the colour is olive brown above with silvery sides and belly, while, in adults it is greenish or bluish above and silvery below. No spots or bars are present on the body. The eyes are bright pink, glowing at night.

Biology

The fish has wide range of tolerance to temperature and salinity. Grows to a maximum size of up to 200 cm. Common sizes are 25-100 cm. It is a highly carnivorous fish, feeds on fishes and crustaceans. Fry feed on zooplankton and fingerlings on crustacean, worms, molluscs etc. Growth is faster in the first three months of the first year.

For breeding, fish migrate to estuaries. They spawn in different parts of India in different months.

In culture ponds the Asian sea bass attains 1.5 to 3.0 kg in the first year and 5 kg in the second year. The fish is highly cannibalistic. Therefore it is suitable for grow out in floating cages with periodic size grading.