

Dai fish catch up 19 pct as flood levels rise in latest season

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First-sale value from largest commercial fishery in Mekong Basin estimated at almost \$10 million

The catch from Cambodia's dai fishery, the biggest commercial fishery in the Lower Mekong Basin, rose 19 percent from a year earlier to an estimated 16,625 tonnes in the 2017-18 season. The maximum flood level at Kampong Loung on the Tonle Sap River climbed from 8.26 m to 8.76 m in the same period. Sales from the fishery, which targets small carps migrating from the Tonle Sap Lake to the Mekong River, were estimated at KHR 39.8 billion (\$9.9 million). The average price of KHR 2,390 (60 cents) a kilo was up from KHR 2,300 (58 cents) in the previous season. *Paralabuca barroni* accounted for 11 percent of the catch, with small mud carps from the *Henicorhynchus* genus making up 7 percent.

The Fisheries Administration, part of Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, has been monitoring dai catches in partnership with the Mekong River Commission since the 1994-95 season. The annual catch has generally ranged from 10,000 to 20,000 tonnes over the monitoring period (see chart), with the lowest catches in the 1998-99 and 2003-04 seasons coinciding with severe droughts. The peak catch estimated at around 46,000 tonnes coincided with a high and prolonged flood in the 2011-12 season.

The dai fishery comprises stationary bag nets set up in rows along a 35 km stretch of the Tonle Sap River between Chhang Chomres in Phnom Penh to the border of Kandal and Kampong Chhnang provinces (see opposite page). Established during French colonial rule in the late 19th century, the fishery operates between October and March every

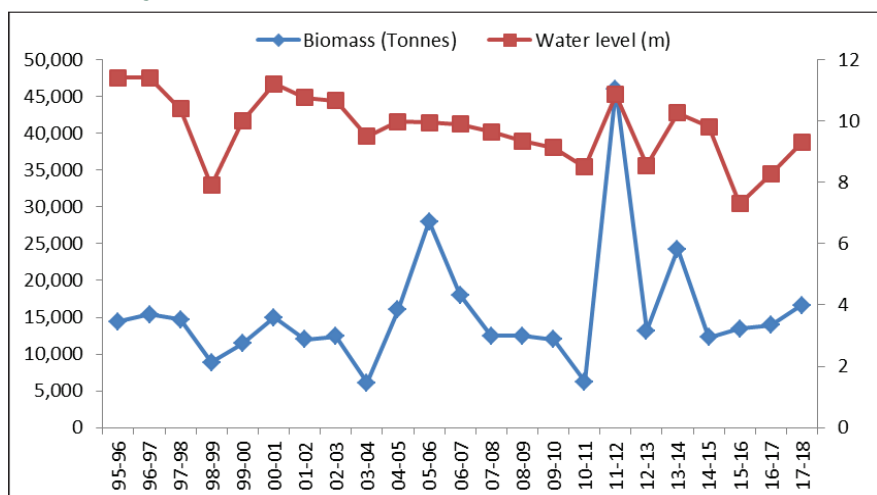
year. Production accounts for about 10 percent of Cambodia's annual inland fish catch with as many as 130 species identified every season. The fishery is considered a large-scale fishery under the Cambodian Fisheries Law of 1996 and is recognised as an accurate indicator of national inland fisheries. The dai fishery could also be a good indicator of Mekong capture fisheries overall and the ecological health of the system.

'Surveys of gill net catches from the Tonle Sap River are of critical importance'

The yield of the dai fishery depends on the fishing effort of other types of fishing gear on the Tonle Sap River, notably gill nets. Thousand sets of gill nets are believed to be operating at the same time as the dai fishery. To understand the overall yield of fish migrating from the Tonle Sap Lake every year, surveys of gill net catches from the Tonle Sap River are of critical importance.

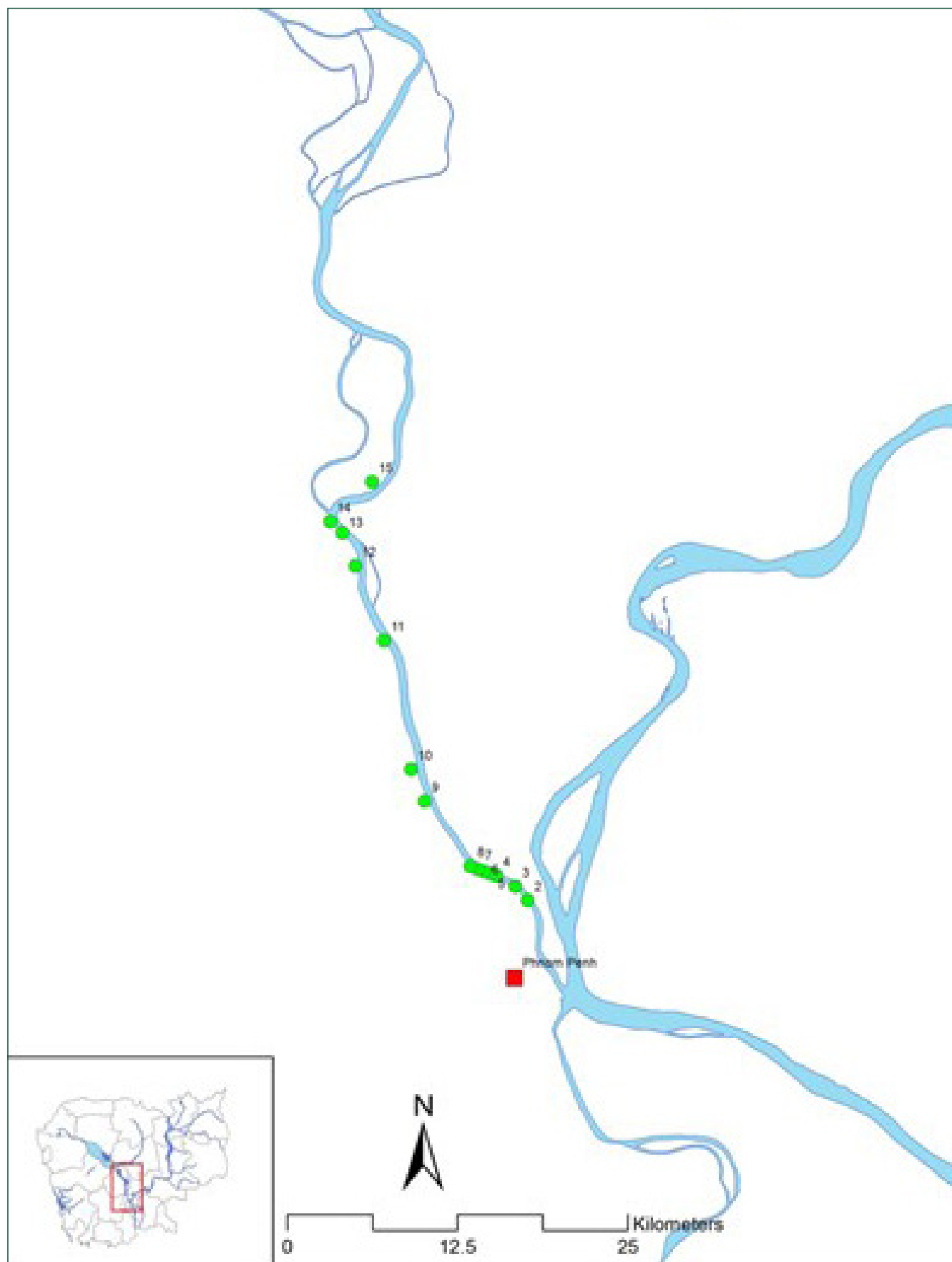
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Dai fishery catches from 1995-96 season to 2017-18 season



SOURCE: INLAND FISHERIES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, CAMBODIAN FISHERIES ADMINISTRATION

Location of 15 rows of bag nets across the Tonle Sap River in 2017-18 season



MAP: INLAND FISHERIES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, CAMBODIAN FISHERIES ADMINISTRATION