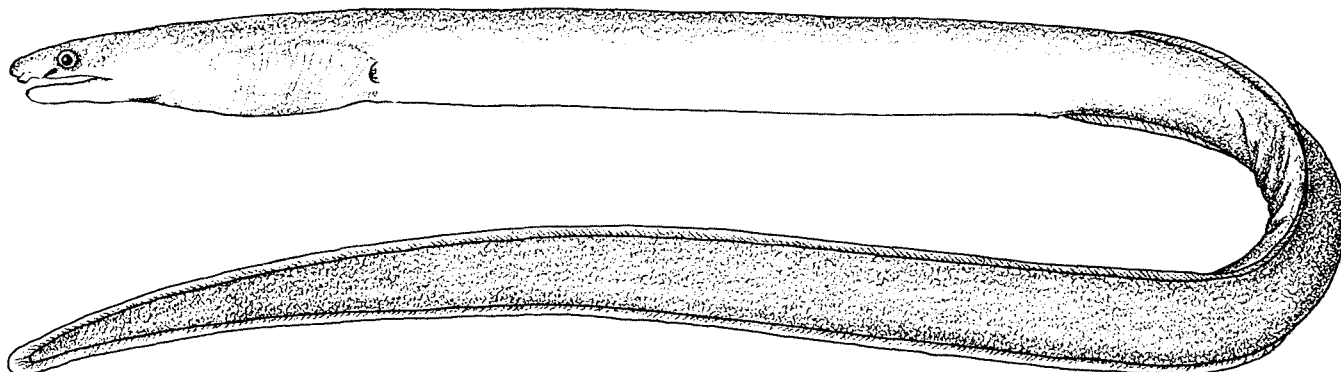


FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: OPHICHTHIDAE

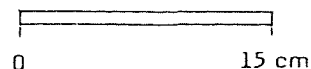
FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)Muraenichthys schultzei Bleeker, 1857

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO : En - Maimed snake eel
 Fr - Serpention manchot
 Sp - Tieso manco



NATIONAL:

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body elongate, cylindrical in front, compressed along tail. Head bluntly conical; mouth moderately large, extending well beyond eye; anterior nostril a short tube, posterior nostril opening outward low on lip, below and before eye; teeth small, sharp in 2 or 3 rows on jaws and on vomer (roof of mouth). Dorsal fin originating close before, to close behind, level of anus; no pectoral fins; no pelvic fins. No scales. Vertebrae about 122.

Colour: dorsal surface above lateral line closely speckled with black; yellow to yellowish-green below; small specimens lack pigment, with the heart and blood vessels showing as reddish structures through the body wall.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Muraenichthys macropterus: dorsal origin before midpoint between gill opening and anus.

M. gymnotus: dorsal origin about a head length before anus or nearly so; anterior vomerine teeth in several rows anteriorly.

M. xorae: dorsal origin about a head length before anus; anterior vomerine teeth in two rows anteriorly.

M. laticaudata: angle of mouth directly under rear margin of eye.

M. gymnotus: snout moderately pointed; greatest depth of body 30-50 times in total; angle of mouth just behind a vertical from rear margin of eye.

M. vermiformis: dorsal origin about 0.1 to 1.0 times the head length behind anus.

Benthenchelys and Neenchelys species: pectoral fins present: posterior nostril lateral, not on lip. Furthermore, dorsal fin origin close behind tips of pectorals in Neenchelys species.

Myrophis species: pectoral fins present; dorsal fin origin over pectoral fins.

All other Ophichthidae (subfamily Ophichthinae): lack a caudal fin and the dorsal and anal fins end just before tip of tail to form a hard, burrowing point.

SIZE:

Maximum: 144 mm; common to about 80 mm

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Northern Mozambique to Aioabra, Red Sea and northwest coast of India. Also Andaman Islands and Indonesia to the Eastern Central Pacific.

A small, active eel burrowing in soft sediment inshore and living in tide pools.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

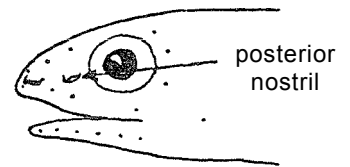
No definite fishing grounds.

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

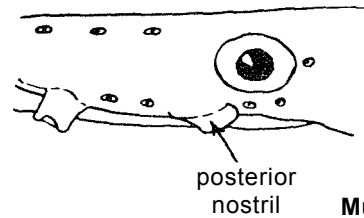
Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught almost exclusively in bag or 'dot' nets, or by digging.

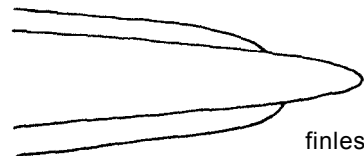
Marketed live or fresh and used as shark bait.



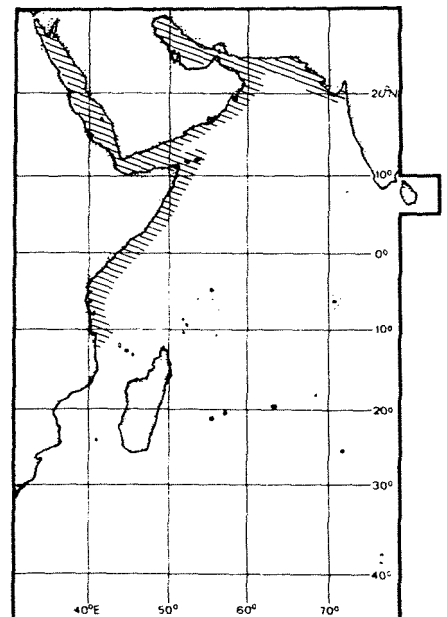
Benthenchelys, Neenchelys



Muraenichthys



finless tail tip
subfamily Ophichthinae

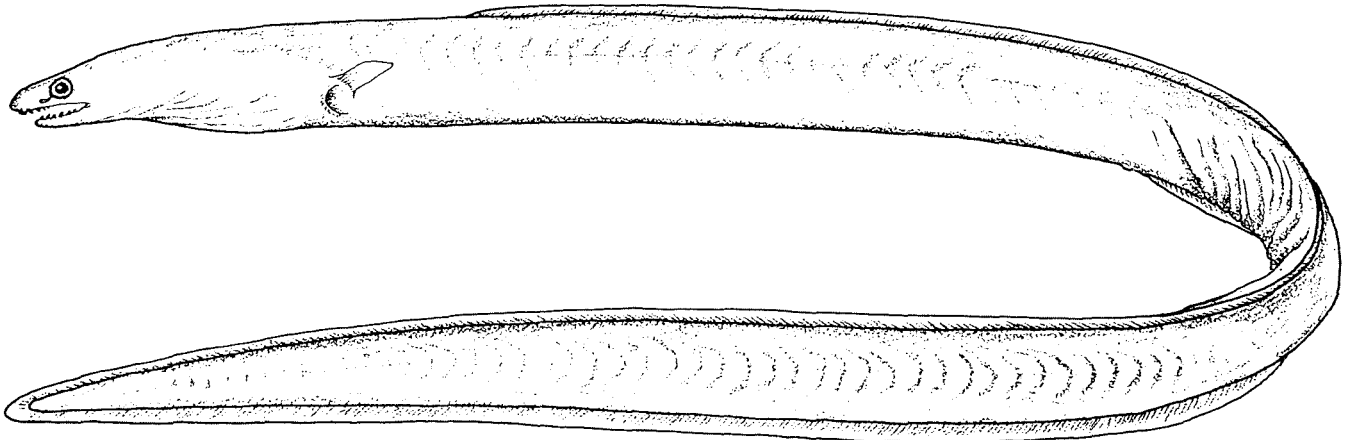


FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: OPHICHTHIDAE

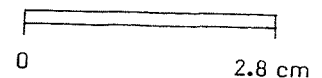
FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)*Neenchelys buitendijki* Weber & de Beaufort, 1916

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO : En - Fintail serpent eel
 Fr - Serpention queue molle
 Sp - Tieso espetón



NATIONAL:

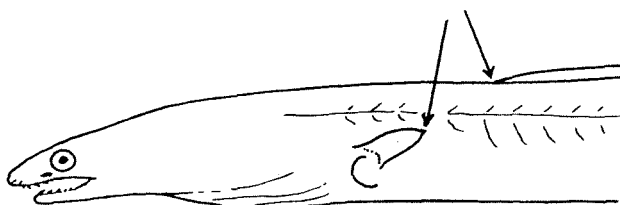
DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body moderately elongate, cylindrical in front, compressed along tail. Head conical, tapering sharply to a pointed snout; mouth moderately large, extending to beyond eye; anterior nostril a short tube, posterior nostril below and before eye; teeth sharp, uniserial, relatively few, widely spaced on jaws and vomer (roof of mouth), those on intermaxillary larger than the others. Dorsal fin originating just behind level of pectoral fin tips; caudal fin complete around tip of tail; pectoral fins small, slender and directed obliquely upward; no pelvic fins. No scales. Vertebrae 141 to 144.

Colour: yellowish-pink overlaid with silver and anteriorly with scattered brownish spots.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

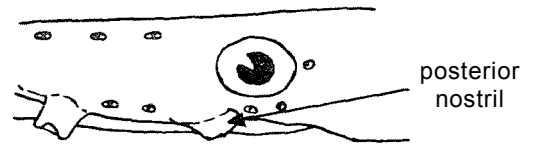
Neenchelys microtretus: dorsal fin begins further back (about two-thirds of head length behind gill opening); more vertebrae (146 to 158, against 141 to 144 in *N. buitendijki*).

*N. buitendijki**N. microtretus*

Myrophis and Muraenichthys species: posterior nostril penetrating upper lip and covered by a lateral flap. Furthermore, Muraenichthys species without pectoral fin, and dorsal fin beginning about midway between gill opening and anus, or about over anus.

Benthenchelys species: dorsal fin origin over anus.

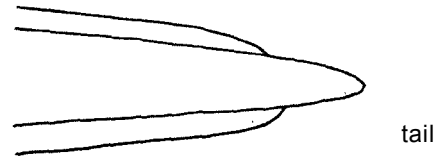
All other Ophichthidae: lack a caudal fin and the dorsal and anal fins end just before tip of tail to form a hard, burrowing point.



Myrophis, Muraenichthys

SIZE:

Maximum. about 30 cm; commonly smaller.



Other genera of Ophichthidae

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

West coast of India from Pakistan to Calicut. Also Indonesia.

A small, burrowing eel which is active over soft sediments at night.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

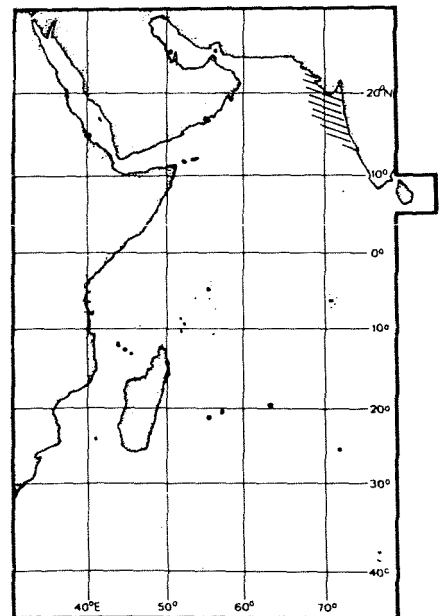
No definite fishing grounds; caught incidentally to other species in the Bombay area.

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught almost exclusively in bag or 'dol' nets.

Marketed fresh and used as bait.

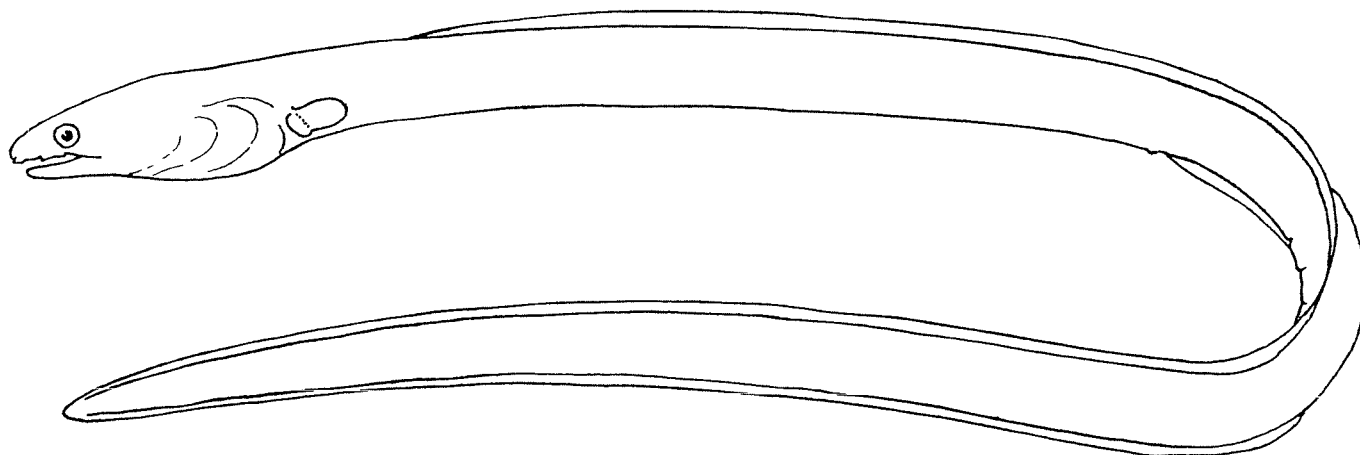


FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: OPHICHTHIDAE

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)Pisodonophis boro (Hamilton-Buchanan, 1822)

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO : En - Rice-paddy eel
 Fr - Serponton des rizières
 Sp - Tieso de los arrozales

NATIONAL:

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body snake-like, cylindrical, compressed only along extreme tail tip. Eye relatively small; anterior nostril tubular, posterior nostril along lower edge of lip; snout moderately protruding in front of lower jaw; teeth in jaws and on vomer (roof of mouth) granular to molariform, but sharper on jaws and more pointed in young individuals multiseriate; a small papilla on upper lip behind base of anterior nostril, a smaller one below eye; throat swollen and supported by a basket of free brachioistegal rays that overlap below. Vertical fins discontinuous posteriorly, the extreme tip of tail stiff and finless; dorsal fin originating about a pectoral fin length behind tips of pectoral fins which are well developed; pelvic fins absent. Lateral line system inconspicuous. Vertebrae 171 to 173.

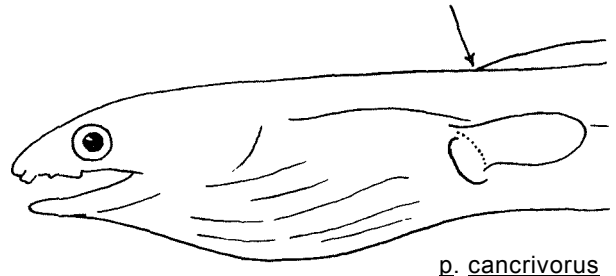
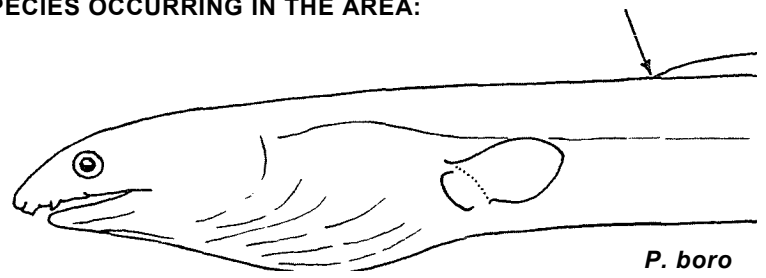
Colour: uniform brownish olive above, lighter below, dorsal fin with a narrow black edge.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Pisodonophis cancrivorus: dorsal fin begins over front part of pectoral fin; fewer vertebrae (about 155, against 171 to 173 in P. boro).

Myrichthys species: dorsal begins well forward on head; conspicuously banded or spotted coloration.

Other species of Ophichthidae: teeth on vomer (roof of mouth) pointed.



SIZE:

Maximum: 100 cm; common to about 70 cm.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

East Africa from Natal to Tanzania, the Seychelles, southern India and Sri Lanka. Also widespread elsewhere from the east Indian coast throughout Indonesia to Polynesia.

Occurs in lagoons and estuaries, entering freshwater and paddyfields.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

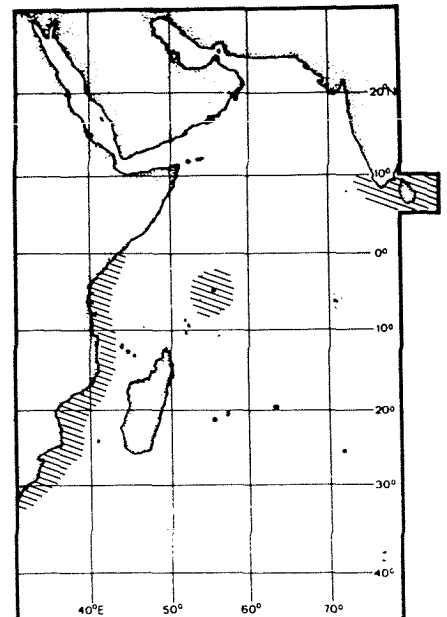
No definite fishing grounds. Caught incidentally to other species.

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught in bag nets and similar gear, mixed with other species.

Marketed fresh and consumed locally.

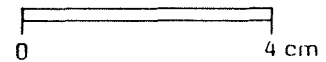
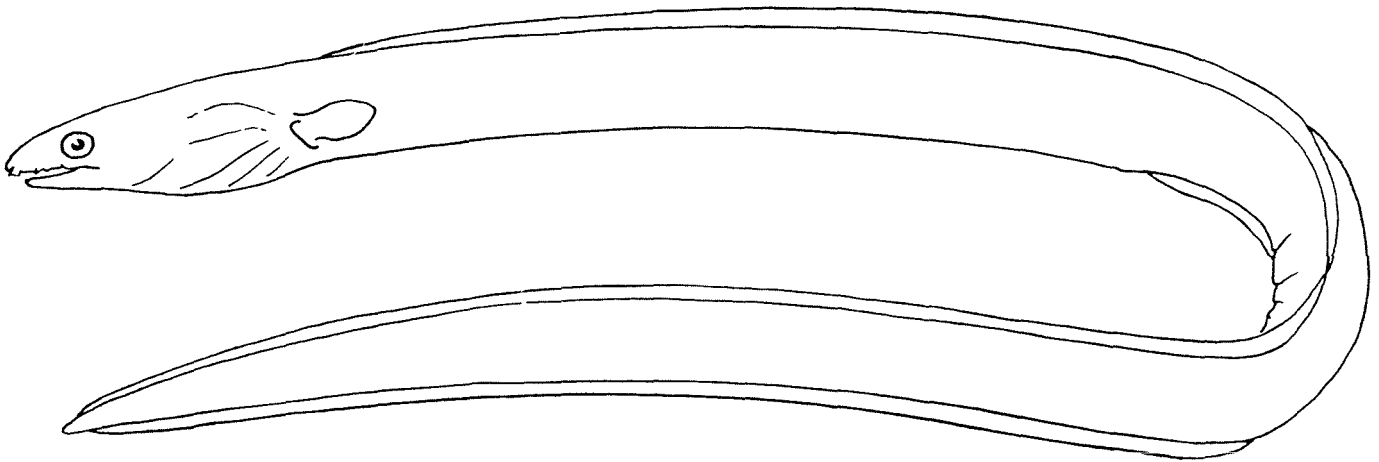


FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS

FAMILY: OPHICHTHIDAE

FISHING AREA 51
(W. Indian Ocean)*Pisodonophis cancrivorus* (Richardson, 1844)

OTHER SCIENTIFIC NAMES STILL IN USE: None



VERNACULAR NAMES:

FAO : En - Longfin snake eel
 Fr - Serpenteon à longue nageoire
 Sp - Tieso aletón

NATIONAL:

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS:

Body snake-like, cylindrical, compressed only along extreme tail tip. Eye relatively small; anterior nostril tubular, posterior nostril along lower edge of lip; snout moderately protruding in front of lower jaw; teeth in jaws and on vomer (roof of mouth) granular to molariform, but sharper on jaws and more pointed in young and on sides of lower jaw, multiserial; a small papilla on upper lip behind base of anterior nostril, a smaller one below eye; throat swollen and supported by a basket of free branchiostegal rays that overlap below. Vertical fins discontinuous posteriorly, the extreme tip of tail stiff and finless; dorsal fin originating over front portion of pectoral fins which are well developed; pelvic fins absent. Lateral line inconspicuous. Vertebrae about 155.

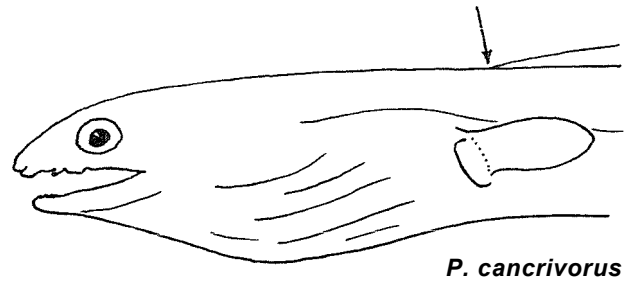
Colour: uniform brownish olive above, light yellow below, dorsal fin with a narrow black edge and a blackish spot anteriorly.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF SIMILAR SPECIES OCCURRING IN THE AREA:

Pisodonophis boro: dorsal fin begins about a pectoral length behind the tips of the pectorals; more vertebrae (171 to 173, against 155 in *P. cancrivorus*).

Myrichthys species: dorsal begins well forward on head; conspicuously banded or spotted coloration.

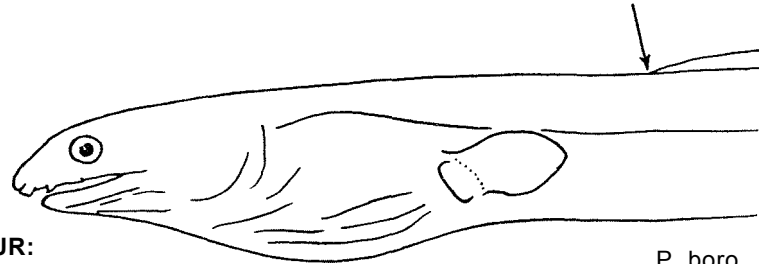
Other species of Ophichthidae: teeth on vomer (roof of mouth) pointed.



P. cancrivorus

SIZE:

Maximum: 75 cm; common to about 50 cm.



P. boro

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Mozambique, Madagascar, Réunion, Mauritius, southern India and Sri Lanka. Also east Indian coast throughout Indonesia to Polynesia and northern Australia.

Occurs in lagoons and estuaries, entering freshwater.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

No definite fishing grounds; caught incidentally to other species.

CATCHES, FISHING GEAR AND FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Separate statistics are not reported for this species.

Caught in bag nets and similar gear, mixed with other species.

Marketed fresh and consumed locally.

