

Fish catch down for third year in a row

Sardines fall the most while Hilsa shows an improvement



Kochi, May 2:

India's marine fish catch dropped 5.3 per cent in 2015, with oil sardines recording the sharpest fall of 51 per cent.

The overall marine fish landings reduced to 3.40 million tonnes against 3.59 million tonnes in 2014, registering a fall of 1.89 lakh tonnes, scientific data estimated by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) showed.

After the all-time high landings of 3.94 million tonnes in 2012, the marine fish catch is showing a decreasing trend every year. It reduced from 4 per cent in 2013 to 5 per cent in 2014, and has now come down to 5.3 per cent, said scientists who estimated the data.

As a major setback for fisheries, a sharp decline of 2.79 lakh tonnes (51 per cent) was witnessed in oil sardines landings, especially in the south-west coast comprising Kerala, Karnataka and Goa. The contribution of oil sardine – which is the single largest contributor towards the total catch – reduced from 15 per cent in 2014 to 8 per cent in 2015.

Reasons for decline

Scientists at CMFRI attributed the sharp fall to the rising water temperature, El Nino effect, over-exploitation and algal bloom. A Gopalakrishnan, Director of CMFRI, who released the marine fish landings data, said the Institute has carried out a special review on the decline in sardine catch, as it will affect the livelihood of fishermen community.

Catch of other important species are recorded as – sardines at 2.56 lakh tonnes; Indian mackerel at 2.38 lakh tonnes; penaeid prawns at 1.99 lakh tonnes; ribbon fishes at 1.77 lakh tonnes; threadfin breams at 1.63 lakh tonnes; croakers at 1.55 lakh tonnes; non-penaeid prawns at 1.49 lakh tonnes; scads at 1.12 lakh tonnes; and Bombay duck at 1.10 lakh tonnes.

Of the nine maritime States and two union territories, Gujarat ranked first with landings of 7.21 lakh tonnes followed by Tamil Nadu with 7.09 lakh tonnes and Kerala with 4.82 lakh tonnes.

High value fish Hilsa Shad, the main driver for the success of the fisheries in West Bengal, showed improvement in landings from 5,247 tonnes in 2014 to 20,659 tonnes in 2015.

However, data showed that the value based on the price at landing centres increased to Rs. 40,100 crore, with a hike of 26.3 per cent over the last year and registered a 24.3 per cent growth at the retail level, touching Rs. 65,180 crore. Unit price per kg of fish at landing centres was recorded at Rs. 118 (32.8 per cent increase) and Rs. 191 at retail level (30.8 per cent increase).

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