



Sardine capture. (Photo Copyright: FIS)

Sardine catch slump hits Kerala fishermen



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A sharp fall in oil sardine (*Sardinella longiceps*) capture in Kerala has caused significant economic loss and employment decline in the fisheries sector, according to results of a joint study conducted by the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) and the [Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute](#) (CMFRI).

The study revealed that losses reached INR 1,500 million (USD 22.2 million) in 2015 and employment dropped by 28.2 per cent, *New Indian Express* reported.

Meanwhile, official statistics informed that sardine price for consumers in the State increased on average 60 per cent, rising from INR 26 per kg to INR 65 per kg (USD 0.38-0.96).

"The famine had a multifold and disastrous effect on the fisher-folk," states a report on the study, which was submitted by Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma.

The study also found that the lack of this fish was caused by disruption in breeding and environmental factors like upwelling in the Arabian sea, coupled with excessive fishing beyond the maximum sustainable yield and excessive juvenile fishing during the 2010-12 period.

"Climatic changes post the 2015 cyclone, characterised by reduced rainfall and increased sea surface temperature, also contributed to the steep fall in catch," states the report.

The report, prepared under the leadership of CMFRI Fishery Environment Management Division head V Kripa, also indicates that the chances of a full recovery in sardine catch is unlikely this year.

"The conditions of the fish and upwelling are good. But a depleted fish stock requires time for rebuilding its population," the report warns.

Given these issues, the CMFRI proposed that the State Government should introduce effective precautionary measures, including stringent curbs on juvenile fishing and regulation to reduce the size of fishing net.

For his part, Dr. A Gopalakrishnan, Director of CMFRI offered all support to the state government in carrying out research for improvement of the fishery sector in the state.