

Fall in sardines catch causes Rs 150 cr loss in Kerala

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CMFRI also analysed the reasons behind the sharp decline in the sardine catch in recent years.

Kerala's fisheries sector has suffered a loss of Rs 150 crore in 2015 due to sharp fall in the availability of oil sardines, according to a study.

The study report prepared by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) said the sardine famine last year resulted in 28.2 per cent losses in employment in the sector and 45.8 per cent in wage share.

The CMFRI submitted the report to state Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma today at a consultative meeting of the research and academic institutes in fisheries sector held at the institute here.

"Average price increase for the sardine consumers in the state was 60 per cent, with the per kg prices going up from Rs 26 to Rs 65. The consequence of the famine had multi-fold and disastrous effect on the fisher folk," the report said.

CMFRI also analysed the reasons behind the sharp decline in the sardine catch in recent years.

"After 2012, there has been serious disruption in the timing of breeding and strength of environmental events like upwelling in the Arabian Sea.

"Besides, 2015 was a strong El Nino year with reduced rainfall and increased sea surface temperature. These coupled with excessive fishing on the stock beyond the maximum sustainable yield and excessive capture of juveniles during 2010-12 has led to a famine in the oil sardine stock in the Arabian Sea off Kerala", it said.

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

"This year the conditions of the fish and upwelling are also good. But a depleted fish stock requires time for rebuilding its population," the report said.

The CMFRI proposed to the state government to introduce effective precautionary measures, including strengthening the curbs on fishing juvenile fishes and bringing in regulation on reducing the length and depth of fishing net.

During the meeting, CMFRI Director Dr A Gopalakrishnan offered all support to the state government in carrying out necessary research works for the improvement of the fisheries sector.

The Minister, who presided at the meeting, said there should be a 'constant mechanism' for effectively disseminating the technologies being developed by the research institutes to the fisher folks and fish farmers.

"A committee of experts representing from all the research institutes in fisheries functioning in the State will be formed for monitoring the mechanism of disseminating the technology to the targeted groups", she said.