

Scientists concerned over juvenile fishing of sharks, manta

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Expressing concern over juvenile fishing of sharks and manta rays, scientists, experts and fishermen in a meeting today emphasised on the need to curb the practice of unsustainable fishing of endangered marine resources.

Speaking at a stakeholders' meeting of fishermen, traders, exporters and scientists organised by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), long-line fisheries expressed their willingness to impose a strict ban on juvenile fishing.

They also offered support to work for maintaining the sustainability of fishery resources in participatory mode.

Government agencies and scientific community should work together to completely avoid juvenile fishing of sharks and manta rays species, the meet stated.

The meeting was organised by the Demersal Fisheries Division of the CMFRI, Kochi, as part of the preparation of non-detriment finding (NDF) document, which is essential for trading of species listed in Appendix II of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Five sharks and two manta rays species had been listed in the Appendix II of CITES, in accordance to the extent of threat to its survival.

CMFRI is the recognised scientific authority for preparing NDF document in the country. The stakeholders' meeting was held to incorporate suggestions of long-line fisheries, traders and exporters for compilation of the NDF, said A Gopalakrishnan, Director of the institute.

"NDF document is part of those CITES requirements for trade of Appendix II listed species prepared by a scientific authority considering their population status, distribution, population trend, harvest, trade information, biological and ecological factors and advising that such export will not be detrimental to the survival of those species," he said.

The catch of sharks and manta rays decreased last year. The catch of manta rays dropped from 40 tonne in 2012 to five tonne last year, Gopalakrishnan said.

Shobha Kizhakudan, Principal scientist of CMFRI said, "Decrease in number of sharks and manta rays is a matter of concern and effective management practices are needed for sustainability of these. We need the support of the fishermen to fill up the existing data gap.