

Over-fishing a big threat to fishes in Indian waters, say experts

CMFRI's achievement

The CMFRI's achievement of successfully seed-producing orange-spotted grouper will be a major breakthrough in protecting the species in the Indian waters," said FRI director Dr A Gopalakrishnan, adding that it would help boost farming of the species in India through sea-cage culture.

The CMFRI has already prepared the Minimum Legal Size (MLS) of 58 marine species, including the groupers, to curb juvenile fishing.

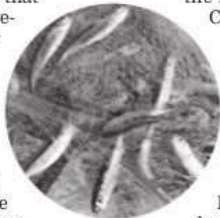
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COMMERCIALY important fish species like groupers are facing severe threat from over-fishing, observed a global meeting of fisheries experts.

The meeting of the Groupers and Wrasses Specialist Group, which is specialised in the valuable reef-associated groupers of the world, held in Azores, Portugal, observed that the population of many grouper fishes was declining due to overexploitation.

The experts also pointed out that the practice of excessive juvenile fishing of the grouper species would worsen the situation in the Indian waters.

Scientists have assessed the extinction risks of all the 164 grouper species - commercially important fishes for livelihood; source of food in many places across the world - under the guidance of



the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation.

A total of 35 experts from 13 countries participated in the review meeting, at which the Indian Ocean Region was represented by Dr Rekha J Nair, principal scientist at the Central Ma-

rine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi.

Juvenile fishing

According to Dr Rekha, who presented the status of groupers in the Indian waters at the meeting, unless juvenile fishing of groupers is stopped completely, many of the species would soon be included in the 'threatened category' in India. "Lack of continuous 'time-series data' on fisheries, biological as-

pects and distribution of important grouper species is a hindrance to proper management of resources," she said, adding that species-wise studies were required to ensure fisheries livelihood and conservation of such fishes. The panelists said many species are particularly vulnerable to over-fishing because of slow maturation, long life, sex reversal and spawning aggregations. They said over-fishing and growing pressure on fish trade would eventually lead to their depletion.

