

Despite soaring demand, fish prices fall in State

40% of demand met through arrivals from other States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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A study by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has found that the fish prices in the State registered a fall in 2016 despite a soaring demand. It showed that 40% of existing total fish demand in the State is met through the arrivals from neighbouring States. This revealed that the gap between demand and supply of domestic fish in Kerala is getting wider on a daily basis.

The study, which was carried out by Shyam S. Salim, Principal Scientist, and his team at the Socio-Economic Evaluation and Technology Transfer Division of CMFRI, pointed out that arrival of fish from the neighbouring States is the major factor which keeps fish prices steady in Kerala.

According to the study, the fish prices registered a fall of 15 to 20% in 2016, which is higher than the increase in landings. The study assumes significance in the context that fish price rose 35% in 2015 compared to 2014. A drastic decline was recorded in the price of mackerel (30.6 %).

Even the species such as sardine, mackerel, an-

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CMFRI STUDY

- Prices fall 15 to 20% in 2016
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- Drastic fall in mackerel prices (30.6 %)
- Average 1,000-1,200 tonne traded daily
- 650-700 tonne comes from other States

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chovies, barracuda and threadfin breams, which are the favourite varieties among the fish consumers in the State, experienced a price fall of 20.7 %. The study highlighted the fact that even if the domestic supply is less compared to the demand, the price does not rise abruptly or proportionally. This is mainly due to the arrivals of fish from other States, which meet the demand-supply gap.

Demand-supply gap

The widening gap between the demand and domestic supply of fish indicated that Kerala will be a net deficit State in terms of fish availability and will need to rely on fish arrivals or imports to

the tune of 40%. It has been found that, based on the demand estimates, an average of 2,000-2,500 tonne of fish is required for the daily consumption of Keralites, of which the domestic supply caters to only 60%. The remaining 1,000-1,200 tonne is to be sourced or imported from other States or countries.

The study shows the demand-supply gap will be widened every year, indicating that Kerala will require 50% of fish from other States to meet the demand in 2035.

The study also found that the fish arrivals from neighbouring States were recorded 60% during the pre-monsoon months from January to March in 2017 owing to reduced fish availability. The macro level analysis of the quantum of fish traded in these selected markets, which was done in February this year, indicated that an average 1,000-1,200 tonne of fish is traded daily here of which 650-700 tonne is coming a day from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Orissa. The study found that Karnataka topped the list of the States from where fish arrives to Kerala.