

Kerala out of top three in fish catch

Despite the fall, State registers 8% increase in marine fish landings during 2016

Kerala has for the first time in history has dropped out of the top three States in marine fish landings in the country. It was ranked fourth behind Karnataka as per the estimates of marine fish landings in the country for 2016 released by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) at its headquarters here on Friday.

Despite the fall, the State registered an 8% increase in its total marine fish catch over the previous year, producing 5.23 lakh tonnes.

Catch in figures

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The percentage change in the quantity landed and price realisation of major species traded in Kerala during 2015-16

Mackerel, sardine

Ironically, while mackerel recorded a sharp decline in Kerala, it emerged top among the major resources obtained across the country. The State produced 0.47 lakh tonnes of mackerel in 2016, which was a drop of 33% from the previous year.

Sardine, the most common fish species of the State, continued to show a declining trend. It recorded 0.46 lakh tonnes in 2016, a 32.8% decrease over previous year. In fact, for the first time, the catch of sardine dropped to the third spot behind scads and mackerel. This was a new low after the high of 2012 when Kerala recorded a sardine catch of 3.90 lakh tonnes.

However, A. Gopalakrishnan, director of the ICAR-CMFRI, predicted a much better sardine production in 2017. Scads (*Decapterus*) emerged the top species registering a catch of 0.54 lakh tonnes.

Even as the landings increased in the State, Kerala suffered in terms of the valuation of fish landings at the landing centre and retail centre in 2016 compared to previous year. The landing centre valuation dropped from ₹9,574 crore to ₹9,149 crore, a fall of 4.40%, and retail centre valuation dropped from ₹14,641 crore to ₹12,398 crore, a dip of 15.30%. CMFRI's landing report showed that chub mackerel (*Scomber indicus*) was limited to the Kerala coasts alone. Around 1,000 tonnes landed off the coasts during 2016.

Break-up

Pelagic finfish contributed 60%, Demersal fin fish 25%, crustaceans 8% and molluscs 7% of the total landings in the State. The mechanised sector contributed 63% of the total landings followed by motorised at 36% and non-motorised sector 1%. The second half of the year witnessed maximum harvest of marine fish accounting for 68% of the total landings.