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Thanks, El Nino! A big catch is on offer

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THE sea, of late, hasn't been all that magnanimous to the fishing community. Dwindling catch had set off alarm bells. But cheer up, folks! The latest trawling ban period, beginning Wednesday midnight, is expected to rejuvenate the marine fishing sector in Kerala. Thanks to the El Nino factor.

A weakened El Nino - the warm Pacific Ocean current affecting climate globally - has led to a good distribution of rainfall along and off the state coast from the onset of this South West Monsoon. Marine experts have had their fingers crossed as, for the past four years, the monsoon had influenced badly the breeding patterns of sardines and mackerel - the major catch for traditional fishermen.

"A good spatial distribution of rainfall will ensure availability of food for the larvae of freshly bred sardines and mackerel which usually occupy surface and sub-surface waters," K Sunil Mohamed of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute told Express.

Besides, the good rainfall and ocean upwelling - a phenomenon in which cold nutrient-rich waters from the ocean depths rise to the top - will play a vital role in mating and the subsequent availability of fish. "Recent observations on the breed-



Ahead of the trawling ban, fishermen in the district are berthing their fishing boats at Puthiyappa harbour in Kozhikode on Tuesday | T P SOORAJ

ing of major fish along the coast of Kerala seem to have confirmed the point the nutrient composition of water during the upwell phenomena played a role in spawning.

And the monsoon seems to be directly related to the breeding of most fish.

If the rain is deficient or in excess, it will influence the breeding or spawning of fish, said Sunil. CM-FRI statistics showed fishermen have been catching sardines from coastal waters chiefly using seines for about 200 years.

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Year	Sardine catch	Decline
2012	3.9 L	-
2013	2.1 L	46 %
2014	1.6 L	61 %
2015	68,431	82 %

(in tonnes)

■ The 47-day annual trawling ban comes into effect from Wednesday midnight. 4,200 mechanised boats will stay away from the sea.