

## Govt. must step in to ensure better prices, says fishermen's union



Tough times: Traditional fishing boats arrive at the Kalamukku fish landing centre in the city on Thursday with the day's catch.

### Considerable fall in prices of major shrimp varieties in Kochi

A “fish drought” combined with a fall in prices of shrimp and sardines being caught this monsoon has left traditional fishermen in dire straits.

Despite the monsoon setting in, oil sardine catch has dwindled sharply, according to Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi convenor Charles George. P.G. Jayakumar of a fishermen's cooperative said the prices of two major shrimp varieties in Kochi had come down considerably as compared to the previous years.

Mr. George said the government should step in to ensure that traditional fishermen got better prices as the price of shrimp, usually caught during the rainy season, had come down. He added that the price had come down from ₹250 per kg to less than ₹200.

Similar was the case with oil sardines.

Though the retail price of oil sardines in Kochi markets was around ₹160 per kg, the fishermen are getting about ₹50 per kg in the southern districts. The price situation in the retail market has also been grossly affected by the slowing down of sardine arrivals from the neighbouring State of Tamil Nadu. Figures released by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in May this year had shown that though marine fish landings in the country rose 6.6% last year to reach 3.63 million tonnes, Kerala was out of the top positions in terms of marine fish catch.

It was also the year in which sardine, which has sustained the fisheries sector in the State, did not figure as a “top-ranked species in terms of fish landings”. The figures had also shown that along with a sharp drop in the catch of oil sardines, mackerel landings in the State had dropped by 33%.