

Fish-meal-makers pledge not to use fish of less than minimum legal size

Marine fisheries sector must have lost up to ₹1,267 crore in 2015 owing to juvenile fishing

Indian Fish Meal and Fish Oil Exporters' Association (IFAFEA) has said that its members will no longer use oil sardines of less than minimum legal size for production of fish meal and fish oil.

The resolution was taken at the end of a stakeholders' meeting here on Thursday. Mahesh Raj, CEO, IFAFEA, said the decision emphasised the importance of Indian oil sardines. Fish meal makers recognised the fact that Indian oil sardine was a very important fishery resource across both coasts of India and its sustainability and responsible exploitation was of paramount importance to the economy and stability of both the capture fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Targeted efforts were needed for regulating fishery through implementation of measures of fisheries management, the resolution added.

The fish meal and oil makers also appealed to governments of maritime States to strictly implement the mesh size regulations stipulated in their respective Acts. They also called for a "total ban on illegal gears not conforming to the stipulated mesh sizes for capture of the Indian oil sardine".

'Initiate punitive steps'

The respective State governments should also initiate punitive actions if anyone caught fish of less than the minimum legal size for any purpose and that the governments should initiate efforts to carry out periodic checks on the fish meal and fish oil plants to ensure that these factories strictly adhered to the stipulations.

The stakeholders' meeting was attended by fishermen's representatives, scientists from institutions like the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, and Marine Products Export Development Authority, apart from representatives of aquaculture feed manufacturers. Mohan Joseph Modayil, former director of CMFRI, presided over the meeting.

An account by the CMFRI had said that the marine fisheries sector in Kerala might have lost up to ₹1,267 crore during 2015 owing to juvenile fishing. Juvenile fishing was banned in August 2015 and the CMFRI recommended a minimum size of 10 cm of Indian oil sardines and 14 cm for Indian mackerel.