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Insurance coverage under-utilised in fisheries sector: CMFRI study

OUR BUREAU

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Shedding light on the alarming situation prevailing in the country's fisheries sector, a study by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) reveals that insurance remains under-utilised in fisheries compared to other agriculture sub-sectors.

The fisheries sector has received little attention either at the Central or State levels except for the presence of a few public insurance companies and co-operative bodies at the local level with limited scale of activity.

Apart from accident risks of fishermen, the other major risks involved in the sector such as loss of, or damage to, fishing vessels and gear, and damage to assets of fishermen are covered only on a limited scale across the country, including Kerala.

Moreover, no insurance policy is available for such risks as the large-scale decline in the stock of fish species, damage of sea cages, loss of fish crops, damage to farm structures, etc. But there is fair coverage for accident risks of fishermen in Kerala and Tamil Nadu unlike other States.

The study was conducted both in the capture and culture sectors across 14 fishing centres in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Odisha and among the fish-farmers of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The level of adoption of insurance in aquaculture is also very low.

The study also found that the provision for vessel insurance, gear insurance and coastal asset insurance was quite low, with only one case of gear insurance reported from Kerala and a mere 14 per cent of fishermen from Tamil Nadu taking coastal asset insurance. Insurance coverage of income risks owing to decline in fish stocks and price

risks due to market price fluctuations were not reported by any of the respondents.

According to Shinoj Parappurathu, a CMFRI scientist

and leader of the study, lack of awareness among the fishing community on the need for, and benefits of, insurance schemes is one of the major reasons behind the situation. The trust deficit between insurance companies and the fishing community was also a contributing factor for the low coverage.

