

# Catch of the day: Oil sardines back in Kerala's waters

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Kochi, March 29

After witnessing a record low catch of 45,000 tonnes in 2016, landings of oil sardines — the most popular fish variety — seem to be showing signs of recovery with the landings in 2017 at 1.27 lakh tonnes.

A Gopalakrishnan, Director, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), said that the measures to implement minimum legal size (MLS) of 58 marine fish species have had some positive impact on marine fish landings in Kerala. The CMFRI had recommended the State government to implement the MLS after it discovered that juvenile fishing was one of the major reasons for dwindling marine fish landings in the State.

It is pointed out that oil sardine production was at a record high in the country as well as in Kerala with a production of 720,270 tonnes and 399,786 tonnes respect-



The decline in oil sardine population was attributed to the failure of spawning, juvenile fishing and the onset of El Nino

ively in 2012. Thereafter, the catch declined continuously to a low of 244,992 tonnes and 45,958 tonnes respectively in 2016.

"The fishery trend of 2017 indicates a revival of oil sardine production along the Kerala coast," said EM Abdusamad, Principal Scientist, who studied the reasons behind the decline of sardine for the last couple of years.

The recovery, according to him, has been effected due to the restoration of normal coastal environment follow-

ing retreat of El Nino impact coupled with the measures enforced along the region to curtail juvenile fishing.

The decline in oil sardine abundance was attributed the retarded growth in the species and total failure of spawning in 2015-16 following warming up of coastal waters around peninsular India with focal point along Kerala coast. The warming up was prelude to the onset of El Nino, which gradually created an environment unfavourable to oil sardines.