

Sardine production to be hit hard by El Nino: Marine research body

FE BUREAU

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OIL SARDINE STOCK along the Kerala coast is likely to suffer a major setback during the coming years due to the El Niño factor, according to the state-run Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

India is the second-largest fish producer in the world after China and accounts for nearly 6% of global fish production.

Scientists at the institute are of the view that El Niño is the major factor that causes decline in the oil sardine stock.

After studying the data of fluctuations in the production of the oil sardine for last 60 years, the scientists at the Pelagic Fisheries division of the CMFRI concluded that El Niño has an impact on the biological cycle of the sardines.

"Although a record catch of nearly four lakh tonne of oil sardine was recorded in the state in 2012, a gradual decrease was recorded in the landings during the following years, owing to the development of El Niño," said EM Abdussamad, principal scientist at CMFRI.

A sharp decline in sardine catch to about 46,000 tonne was recorded in 2016, following a strong El Niño year in 2015.

With the intensity of the El Niño decreasing, the sardine catch registered an increase in 2017, he added.

"Indian oil sardine is a sensitive pelagic fish whose biological cycle will easily be upset even due to slight differences in ocean ecosystem. The impact of El Niño is more evident along Kerala coasts than other areas of the country. Hence, the fluctuation in oil sardine catch is always high along the south west coast," he added.

He said that the oil sardine in Kerala coast suffered growth retardation and spawning failure in 2015 and 2016 due to El Niño.

"What is more alarming now is that El Niño has struck again even before the



GLOBAL WARMING

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resource recovered from biological stress like spawning failure in full scale which is likely to cause further troubles to the sardine stock in Kerala," he said.

"El Niño has been proved to be seriously influencing the growth and reproduction of oil sardine resources in this coast. In addition, it has been noted that sardine used to migrate from Kerala to other coasts during El Niño years," Abdussamad said.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) also stated that 2018 was an evolving El Niño year and that 2019 may be warmer due to El Niño and global warming, CMFRI sources said.