



Where have all the fish gone?

● **Steena Das**

The rise in temperature across the state stands as an obstacle for fishermen to eke out a proper living. The rate of fish landings have considerably dropped, said scientists with the

Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Vizhinjam, based on a study conducted. Fish landing refers to the number of fish that are found and caught from the sea. Although December to March is considered to be a

lean time period for fish landings, the decrease is notable. Surplus fish usually found in the sea in close proximity to the land have reduced, heat playing the pivotal factor.

"Fish species like kerī chala (a type of sardine) and mene maculata, which are generally lesser in number have increased. On the contrary, ney chala and pollal

choora (a type of tuna), found in large quantities, have decreased," said a CMFRI scientist. The study also reveals the damage afflicted by cyclone Ockhi, which minimised fish landing.

"Most days, we return with empty fishing nets. Even if we are lucky enough to get fishes, they aren't big fish," said Thomas Levis, a fisher-

man at Shankumugham. Due to changes in the fishing ground, fishermen travel deep into the sea for fishing. "We spend more kerosene for deep sea fishing and yet we return empty-handed," said Francis Xavier, a fisherman from Poonthura.

As per the study, fish landing along the Thiruvananthapuram coast in 2016 is estimated to be 45,000 tonnes. It expanded to 53,000 tonnes in 2017 and further swelled to 57,000 tonnes. However, this year shows no visible increase.

The soaring temperature has also affected the hatching ability of fish as the optimum temperature required for fish wealth has changed. Thus, scientists assume temperature as the primary reason for reduced fish landing. Further research is being conducted at the headquarters of CMFRI in Kochi.

According to fishermen, increased use of fishing lights have impacted the fishing ecosystem. "The lights attract smaller fish, thereby trapping them in nets. This is another factor for the reduced fish wealth near land. The Government should take immediate action against fishermen engaged in light fishing," said Jelastin Manoj, a fisherman from Valiathura.

FISH LANDING STUDY CONDUCTED AT CMFRI

Fish landing (in tonnes)	2016	2017	2018
	45,000	53,000	57,000



Reduced fish landing has left fisherfolk jobless ● Vincent Pulickal