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'Overfishing, killing of juvenile fish on rise along Maha coast'

WORLD OCEANS' DAY Fish not being allowed to grow caused state ₹686-crore loss in 2018: Study

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MUMBAI: Ahead of World Oceans' Day, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) released data on Friday that shows an alarming rise in overfishing in Maharashtra, particularly of juvenile fish. Aside from posing a threat to marine life, fish not being allowed to grow to their natural size means an economic loss of an estimated ₹686 crore for the state in 2018.

After analysing data collected throughout the year, the CMFRI, Mumbai, has concluded that juvenile fish catch across Maharashtra led to an overall loss exceeding ₹686 crore in 2018. The amount was ₹355 crore for 2017.

"Our coastal waters remain open for unlimited entry and non-restricted harvest of fish. The limited management options with increasing fishing effort and high juvenile bycatch is a worrying trend," said Ajay Nakhawa, from the CMFRI, Mumbai. Juvenile fish are used to make different kinds of processed food and in the aquaculture industry.

With 2.8 lakh tonnes of catch in 2018, Maharashtra is one of the leading marine fish capturing states in India. The CMFRI also found that 50% of the total amount of juvenile bycatch in the state is found in Mumbai. This is partly because of city fishermen use trawlers that sweep the sea floor and also because sellers from nearby areas bring their catch to Mumbai hoping to secure

'INDIA NEEDS A NEW OCEAN POLICY' ECONOMICAL LOSSES DUE TO JUVENILE BY-CATCH IN MAHARASHTRA



PERCENTAGE OF JUVENILE FISH SPECIES CAUGHT AT FERRY WHARF, MUMBAI

CMFRI also calculated the percentage of juvenile by-catch at Ferry Wharf in Mumbai's Mazgaon, which was one of the highest for India, researchers said.

Juveniles of fish species	Percentage of juveniles caught
Indian Lizardfish	85.5%
Wolf herring	64%
Pomfret	56.2%
Cattfish	32.71%
Bombay duck	3%
Shrimp	13-24%
Crab	17.8%

(Source: CMFRI)



Sanjay Upadhyay, a Supreme Court lawyer, recently wrote to the central government asking it to create a new ocean policy. "Issues such as fishing beyond 12 nautical miles and national jurisdiction, the complexity between the state and the Centre on the ocean and coastal resources, the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) network, traditional fisherfolk rights etc. all need to be incorporated under one policy to address rising concerns," he said.

higher prices. The percentage of juvenile bycatch at Ferry Wharf in Mumbai's Mazgaon is one of the highest in India, said the CMFRI, with lizard fish, pomfret, catfish, Bombay duck and shrimp (see box) juveniles being caught in high quantities.

Anulekshmi C. in charge of the CMFRI in Mumbai said, "It is affecting whole ecosystem. Juvenile bycatch leads to economic

inefficiency and an already visible drop in quantity and quality of consumable fishes," the scientist said.

To lower juvenile bycatch, Tarun Shridhar, secretary, department of animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries, issued an advisory in February, directing all coastal states to implement a minimum legal size for catching, landing and trade of

fish. "We changed the use of nets to 40mm square mesh codends as opposed to traditional diamond-shaped nets (size 20-25mm) that used to pick up large quantities of juvenile fish. Wherever implementation is lacking, action is being taken," said Rajendra Jadhav, joint commissioner, fisheries.

However, members of the Maharashtra Purse-seine Fishermen

Welfare association said codend square mesh nets were not being used and alleged the state profited from juvenile fish sales. "There is a strong lobby behind the non-implementation of square mesh nets. Juveniles are being caught and sent to the fishmeal industries. If the quality is bad, they are sent for poultry meal," said chairman Ganesh B Nakhawa.