

Kochi hosts global meet on shark trade

OUR BUREAU

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A four-day global expert meeting on shark trade got under way at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) with a call to address deep knowledge gaps and support the management of existing shark and ray fishery across the globe.

Experts recognised some progress but also many difficulties in assessing shark trade and maintenance of sustainability of this marine resource owing to shortage of proper data. The meet stressed the need for mapping and understanding of the full value chain of these species to secure sustainability of commercial fishery and markets, which would benefit both the stakeholders and the resources.

The event is jointly organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the CMFRI as part of a collaborat-

ive research project of the two entities.

Experts attending the discussions felt the need for well-informed guidelines for collecting and reporting information on use, markets and market chain for shark and ray commodities globally.

Kim Friedman, Senior Fishery Resources Officer of the FAO said that even though many countries are trying hard to collect information on various fishery related activities, there is still severe shortage of data on the full value chain that included consumption, local and retail sale including exports of these resources.

Referring to the research achievements of the CMFRI in the conservation and sustainable utilisation of these species, A Gopalakrishnan, Director said the institute has already developed guidance for the National Plan of

Action (NPOA) on Sharks, Non-Detriment Findings (NDF) document on CIITES listed elasmobranchs and developed DNA barcodes of more than 100 elasmobranchs (sharks, rays and guitar fish) species.

Shoba Joe Kizhakudan, Principal Scientist and the leading researcher from CMFRI in the collaborative research work with FAO said that mapping of value chain of shark trade is very much important in India where sharks are landed whole and every part of the shark is utilised in one form or the other.

Several market chains exist in India for shark products, with dried meat being sent from the south west coast to as far as the north eastern hill states, but this needs to be documented with valid data. For this, it is necessary to develop trust and transparency between researchers and stakeholders, she added.