

El Nino may cause major drop in sardine catch, say scientists

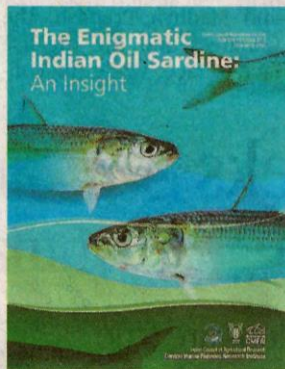
Impact of climate pattern more evident along Kerala coast

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Scientists at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) are of the view that as El Nino gains momentum, sardine stock off the Kerala waters will be severely affected leading to a substantial drop in catch.

After studying data on fluctuations in the production of oil sardine for the last 60 years, the Pelagic Fisheries Division of the CMFRI has published a monograph, 'The Enigmatic Indian Oil Sardine: An Insight', which points out that El Nino is a major factor that has caused the depletion of oil sardine stock.

There was a marginal increase in sardine catch in



The cover of a monograph on oil sardines brought out by the CMFRI.

2017 after a record-low harvest in 2016. However, El Nino that began to gain pace before the sardine stock revived to its normal level from an earlier depletion may spell disaster on Kerala's fisheries, said E.M. Abdussamad, principal scientist at CMFRI.

The Climate Prediction Centre of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration had warned in December last year that El Nino was expected to strengthen in the coming seasons. The World Meteorological Organisation and the Indian Meteorological Department too said that 2018 was an evolving El Nino year, and that 2019 might be warmer, the scientist said.

According to him, oil sardine along the Kerala coast suffered growth retardation and spawning failure in 2015 and 2016, thanks to El Nino. "What is more alarming now is that El Nino has struck again even before the resource recovered from biological stress like spawning failure in full scale which is likely to cause further troubles to sardine stock in Kerala," Dr. Abdussamad said.

The impact of El Nino is more evident along the Kerala coast than other areas. Hence, the fluctuation in oil sardine catch is high along the southwest coast, he said.