

Fresh fish in short supply in lockdown

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Kochi: Availability of fresh fish in the city during the lockdown has gone down by more than 85%, according to a study. Only 20 metric tonnes (MT) of fish were sold daily during the lockdown as against an average of 150MT on pre-lockdown days, revealed the rough estimate.

The shortage was not because of the lack of production, but of hassles in distribution and reaching out to buyers. The reports of contaminated fish also played a role in keeping the customers away.

"Around 550 brackish fish farmers couldn't sell their fish because there were no auctions. There was around 400MT of fish waiting to be harvested in the farms around Kochi," said Shinoj Subramaniam, project-head, Krishi Vigyan Kendra of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (KVK-CMFRI).

He said a self-help group, functioning under KVK, was roped in to reach out to homes. "It was easier to go to apartments and we managed to help some of the farmers," he added.

KVK has also been associated with multi-level farming initiatives that have been mushrooming in the district during the lockdown.

He said the farm service centre at CMFRI has been receiving huge response seeking support for farm-related activities. The centre, which was launched last ye-

Representational photo



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ar, offers a host of services to the farmers. They rent out machineries such as tractors, power tiller, power weeder, different types of ploughs, rotavators, earth augers, motorized and hand operated sprayers, paddy transplanter, agro waste shredder, slurry pump and water pump to farmers on payment basis. Tractor-operated bund former, a tool used to prepare terraces for cultivation of tapioca and ginger, is the most sought-after at the centre by the farmers during this season, said Shinoj.

Machineries used in vegetable cultivation and banana farming are also receiving good response from the farmers. Brush cutters are also sought after by budding farmers. The centre also offers agricultural expert advice to the farmers, he said.

"The farm service centre was launched with an aim to offer services in agriculture to the public under one roof. Presently, trained staff of the KVK offer technical services such as land preparation, pond preparation, fish cage fabrication and ploughing," he added.