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BRIEF

Scientists warn against dwindling catch of sharks

Kochi: Indian marine fisheries scientists on Saturday warned of a dwindling catch of sharks compared to previous years and suggested that self-imposed measures are required to conserve this threatened fish group.

Catch data of the last 20 years has shown a sharp fall in the production of 'elasmobranchs' (sharks and rays), scientists of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute said.

They were speaking at a stakeholder workshop here on conservation and trade of sharks held by CMFRI.

Dr P U Zacharia, Head of the Demersal Fisheries Division of the CMFRI, said lack of regulatory measures and overfishing may even lead to the extinction of some shark stocks. Hence, it was high time that the stakeholders gave a thrust to conserving these species, he said.

He said the CMFRI has submitted a 'National Plan of Action on Sharks' to the Centre on its management.

Fishermen and those involved in the shark trade attended the workshop. Representatives of the shark traders sought lifting of the ban on exporting shark fins, flagging the concern that the fishermen community and traders were suffering a huge financial loss by abandoning the fins due to the ban.

They said the fin has a huge demand in overseas markets, and neighbouring countries, including Sri Lanka, exports it and that India loses a good amount of foreign currency in this regard.

Moreover, due to dwindling returns from fishing activities, fishermen are moving away from the occupation and the younger generation are no longer fascinated in taking up the profession, they added.

The workshop was part of a collaborative research project of the CMFRI and the FAO of the UN. The workshop was also aimed at creating awareness among the stakeholders about the suggestions of the recently concluded CMFRI-FAO joint global meet on shark trade. — PTI