



01 July 2020

State records lowest marine fish landings in 45 years: only 2.01 lakh tonnes catch last year

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MUMBAI, JUNE 30

MAHARASHTRA HAS recorded its lowest marine fish landings in 45 years. With 2.01 lakh tonnes, the catch for 2019 was 32 per cent less than 2018. The decline in fish landings in the state is attributed to extreme weather events last year: bad weather, extended rain and cyclones.

As per data released by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), the all-time lowest catch in the state was recorded in 1974 at 1.8 lakh tonnes. The CMFRI has recorded fish landings since the 1950s. It has noted a decreasing trend in catch in the last few years — in 2018 it was 2.95 lakh tonnes, while in 2017 it was 3.81 lakh tonnes.

Fish landings refer to the catch that arrives at ports. While the state recorded a decline, India's marine fish production saw a marginal rise of 2.1 per cent in 2019 from the previous year at 3.56 million tonnes in total landings across coasts. Indian Oil Sardine (*Sardinella longiceps*), which used to be the top contributor to India's marine fish basket, continued to record a dip in landings with a 6 per cent decrease compared to 2018. Rising sea temperature is one of the main rea-

THE CATCH

BOMBAY DUCK, commonly known as Bombil, was the third most landed fish in 2019, though there was a slight decline (0.8%) compared to previous year. It comprised 8.2% of Maharashtra's total catch

INDIAN MACKEREL (Bangda) catch decreased by 34.4%
SILVER POMFRET recorded an increase in catch at 3.2%
CRAB LANDINGS decreased by 39.5%
LOBSTER LANDINGS decreased by 70.3%

sions behind the dip in Indian Oil Sardine catch, the CMFRI noted.

The decline in fish landings in the state is attributed to extreme weather events last year. Cyclonic storm Hikka (September 22-25), super cyclonic storm Kyarr (October 24-November 2), extremely severe cyclonic storm Maha (October 30-November 7) and Cyclone Pawan in December led to 50 non-fishing days in four months (September to December), a 35 per cent decrease in fishing days.

In addition to decline in fish landings, the state also leads in post-harvest loss in fisheries. The Redtoothed triggerfish (*Odonus niger*), a commercially unimportant fish which feeds on other fish and is mostly used for chicken feed, became the most landed resource (2.74 lakh tonnes), registering a huge increase in landings

from 0.72 lakh tonnes in 2018. The fish is usually found in the coral reef of Lakshadweep. Fishermen from Maharashtra had then written to the CMFRI. While the CMFRI is studying the reasons behind the jump, the preliminary observation shows changes in water currents in the Arabian Sea could be responsible.

Another highlight is, Indian mackerel, which was in first spot in 2018 but suffered the biggest setback in landings declining by 43 per cent during last year. Among the nine maritime states, Tamil Nadu topped in landings with 77.5 lakh tonnes followed by Gujarat at 7.49 lakh tonnes. Gujarat was holding the first position for the past few years. Kerala retained the third position with 5.44 lakh tonnes of fish landings. Maharashtra dropped to seventh position.