



SHARP DECLINE OF OIL SARDINE IN KERALA, SAYS CMFRI

Catch of oil sardine has drastically decreased to a meagre 3297 tonnes in Kerala last year, according to the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). Compared to the previous year, 2021 experienced a drop of 75 percent in the sardine catch across the Kerala coast. This was the lowest catch of the fish after 1994 in the state. Again, this was 98 percent lower than the annual average of sardine availability during 1995 - 2020 which is 1.66 lakh tonnes. The finding was presented at a workshop held at CMFRI on Tuesday with the participation of the representatives of various fishermen organisations.

However, Kerala recorded 5.55 lakh tonnes of total marine catch in 2021 registering an increase of 54 percent compared to the COVID-hit 2020 in which it was 3.6 lakh tonnes. Lesser sardine (65,326 tonnes) topped the list of the most landed resources in the state in 2021, followed by Indian mackerel (56,029 t) and scad (53,525 t). Even as oil sardine, silver bellies and black pomfret decreased, penaeid prawns, squid

and threadfin breams increased significantly during the year, said Dr. T. M. Najmudeen while presenting the findings.

Small-scale fishers bear the brunt of dwindling catch of sardine

Kerala's marine fisheries sector suffered a severe loss owing to the steep decline in the catch of oil sardine, showed another CMFRI study that was presented at the workshop. The annual value of the sardine in the landing centres was dropped to Rs. 30 crores from that of Rs. 608 crores in 2014, incurring a loss of Rs. 578 crores to the sector, said Dr N Aswathy, Principal Scientist of CMFRI who led the study. The small-scale fishermen who venture into the sea on outboard ring seines bore the brunt of the dwindling catch of the sardine as they primarily depended upon this fish for livelihood. Even as many other fish resources showed an increase in the landings, the annual income of this group of fishers was reduced to Rs. 90262 in 2021 from that of Rs. 3.35 lakh, she said.