

## **Rise in harmful algal blooms in Arabian Sea posing health risk to fish consumers, say scientists**

Marine scientists have warned of increasing frequency and intensity of the harmful algal blooms (HAB) posing the threat of food-borne diseases among fish consumers. The phenomenon also triggers fish mortality that affects mariculture in particular and fisheries in general. According to the scientists, there is roughly a three-fold increase in the harmful algal bloom reported during 2000-2020.

The issue came up at the One Health Aquaculture India workshop organised by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) of the United Kingdom and the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). The workshop discussed the use of the 'one health framework' to integrate key issues in animal, environmental and human health, said a communication from the CMFRI.

Presenting the status of HAB in Indian waters, Grinson George, senior programme specialist at the SAARC Agriculture Centre, Dhaka, said issuing early advisories was essential in helping shift the fish or plan early harvest. "Increased frequency and intensity of HAB badly affect mariculture activities such as cage fish farming as it leads to fish-kill," he added.

Aquaculture-associated health issues and water-borne diseases among the farming community are on the rise, making the situation worse in the wake of extreme weather events such as floods, tropical cyclones, and receding coastline, he added. The workshop is funded by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme which is part of the United Kingdom's Blue Planet Fund and is aimed at developing collaborative approaches to improve safe and sustainable aquaculture production in India.

Experts, who spoke at the workshop, also maintained that anti-microbial resistance (AMR) was a growing threat to health system across the globe. Aquatic food systems and value chains also contribute to the AMR risk in multiple ways. They stressed the need to follow safe aquatic health management options to contain the menace. Examples from various countries on the role of communities in combating anti-microbial resistance were presented by David Verner Jeffreys, principal scientist at CEFAS, United Kingdom.