

Kerala: Juvenile fishing of threadfin breams caused Rs 178 cr loss

Kochi, Jun 15 (IANS): Juvenile fishing practice continues to be a major challenge in Kerala's marine fisheries sector, and juvenile fishing of threadfin breams has caused a loss of Rs 178 crore, a report of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), here said. The CMFRI report pointed out that 31 per cent of the threadfin breams (Kilimeen) caught from the Kerala coast last year were juveniles (below the Minimum Legal Size-MLS). This has incurred a loss of Rs 178 crore to the sector, while juvenile fishing of Indian oil sardine caused a loss of Rs 137 crore, the report said.

Presenting the report, CMFRI Principal Scientist T M Najmudeen said that in 2022, juvenile fishing was increasingly reported during the trawling ban period as against the previous years. "However, the unscientific practice is on a declining trend ever since the MLS was implemented in the state," said Najmudeen.

In a case study done in threadfin breams to analyse the impact of the MLS implementation on Kerala's marine fisheries, the CMFRI found that standing stock biomass, yield and recruitment numbers of this fish had a substantial increase of 27 per cent, 47 per cent and 64 per cent respectively after the regulation was put in place. A significant percentage of sharks (82 per cent) which are not covered by the MLS regulations, caught off the Kerala coast last year were below their size at first maturity.

According to CMFRI, the sector incurs a loss of Rs 4,54,000 when fishing one tonne of juvenile oil sardines. Refraining from exploiting the young stocks would not only help fishermen increase their income but also aid in reviving the fishery, said Najmudeen. Stakeholders demanded that the MLS regulations be implemented across the country besides extending a special package provided to compensate for the loss while abstaining from juvenile fishing.