

Fisheries sector incurs a loss of ₹4.5 lakh for every tonne of juvenile oil sardines produced

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Juvenile fishing practice continues to be a major challenge in Kerala's marine fisheries sector, according to the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

A CMFRI report presented at a stakeholder workshop pointed out that 31 per cent of the threadfin breams (*Kilimeen*) caught from the Kerala coast last year were juveniles (below the size of the Minimum Legal Size-MLS). This has incurred ₹178 crore to the sector, while juvenile fishing of Indian oil sardines caused a loss of ₹137 crore.

The workshop, attended by stakeholders including representatives of fishermen, boat owners, and allied workers, was organised to discuss the latest trends and issues in the marine

fisheries sector of the State.

CMFRI Principal Scientist TM Najmudeen said juvenile fishing was increasingly reported during the trawling ban period in 2022 against the previous years. However, the unscientific practice is on a declining trend ever since the MLS was implemented in the State.

AIDING RECOVERY

In a case study on 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 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 ₹4.54 lakh 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.

EM Abdussamad stressed the need for including more fishes under the MLS regulation and revising the existing MLS of certain fish species. Studies and discussions are underway in this re-

gard. CMFRI Director A Gopalakrishnan said self-regulation and conducive climatic conditions might be the reason behind the increase in marine fish production including oil sardine in Kerala last year.

SPECIAL PACKAGE

The resources such as purple-back flying oceanic squid, mesopelagic fishes, and non-conventional ribbon fish species (*Trichiurus auriga*) commonly seen on the southern coast, which are hitherto unexploited, have immense potential for fishing, he said.

Stakeholders demanded a special package should be provided to compensate for the loss while abstaining from juvenile fishing. They also wanted to restrict the entry of fishing boats from other states to the Kerala coast and stop the issuance of licenses to new boats.