

# Agricultural science congress concludes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

THE 16th Agricultural Science Congress (ASC) organised by the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) concluded in Kochi on Friday with scientists giving a call to prohibit the intentional killing of marine mammals in commercial fisheries.

“India should comply with the US Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) that prohibits the intentional killing of marine mammals in commercial fisheries. The US is a major importer of Indian seafood, accounting for 33% of the country’s total exports in terms of value. If India fails to comply with the MMPA, its seafood exports to the US could be affected, impacting the livelihood of fishermen communities,” said Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) joint director P Anilkumar.

The Central Marine Fisheries

Research Institute (CMFRI) has undertaken research on marine mammals in India based on stranding data, offshore surveys, onshore surveys, and bycatch estimates, said director A Gopalakrishnan. “The major focus of research on marine mammals in India is to estimate the status of stocks, understand the correlation between environmental variables and abundance, assess the impacts of climate change, and develop conservation measures,” said scientist E Vivekanandan.

The CMFRI also proposed the establishment of mariculture parks to enhance the coastal fish production of the country, in view of the growing food and nutritional demand. Scientists hold the view that the parks would help avoid the scattered and unplanned expansion of sea farming, which can lead to disruption of the ecosystem, user conflicts, and other social issues.