

Jellyfish Offer Potential Income for Fishermen, Sustainable Management Crucial: Experts



Thiruvananthapuram, Nov 23 (PTI) Jellyfish fisheries offer a potential source of income for fishermen and contribute to the national economy, according to marine experts. However, the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has said sustainable management practices, quality control, acceptance in the domestic market, and adaptation of jellyfish to fishing and environmental changes are crucial for the long-term viability of this industry.

"Jellyfish play a pivotal role in marine ecosystems and hold increasing significance in recent days in the global seafood market, providing a potential source of additional income. Sustainability remains a core focus, and a cautious and well-informed approach is required to their exploitation. "An ecosystem-based management strategy is vital for understanding the interactions between jellyfish and their environment and for developing effective management strategies, said A Gopalakrishnan, Director of CMFRI. He was speaking at a special session on 'Jellyfish Fisheries and Trade: Status, Trends, and Impacts on Livelihood' at the ongoing Symposium on Jellyfish Blooms on Friday at Kovalam near here. Given the increased fishing effort in the coastal waters along with the adverse impact of climate change, exploring the prospects of the jellyfish fishery could be a highly promising alternative, the CMFRI director said. India registered a landing of 11,756 tonnes (wet weight) of jellyfish in 2021, showing the re-emerging trend of this fishery on the Indian coast, the CMFRI Director said.

"Since 2005, the jellyfish fishery has re-emerged as a well-networked enterprise and has grown significantly. The main species contributing to the fishery now include *Rhopilema hispidum* and *Catostylus perezii* in the northwest, *Crambionella annandeli* in the northeast, and *C. orsini* in the southwest," he said. "However, there is a lack of consumer tradition and awareness regarding their consumption in the country. Addressing this gap requires promotional initiatives to shift public perception and acceptance of jellyfish as a novel food item within the country," Gopalakrishnan added. Emphasising the need to address the challenges posed by jellyfish blooms, the CMFRI director said it is imperative to understand the causes behind these blooms, minimise their negative impacts, and harness their potential in a sustainable manner.

The symposium was organised by Kerala University in association with the CMFRI. Presenting the processing technologies and the trend of jellyfish export, Bindu J, Head of the Fish Processing Division at ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology said that India exported jellyfish products worth Rs 1312.88 lakhs during 2022-23, with the majority of these exports destined for China. According to her, jellyfish are consumed in Asian countries such as China, Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand as part of the traditional cuisine. "China continues to be the world's biggest producer and consumer of jellyfish, contributing over 60 per cent of all landings worldwide", she said.

Bindu further said that the commercial exploitation of jellyfish is still limited due to a lack of knowledge on fishery methods, post-harvest handling and processing, and quality standards. She proposed a comprehensive range of strategies, including targeted harvesting, the formulation of post-harvest handling and processing protocols, the implementation of safety standards and quality control measures, and the establishment of robust value chains. Miriam Paul Sreeram, Principal Scientist of CMFRI stressed the need for domestic market consumer acceptance and innovative value-added products from jellyfish. "Strengthening supply chains, exploring new export markets and creating awareness among fishermen are also required to boost the jellyfish fishery and trade in the country," she added.

A Bijukumar A, Head of Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries of Kerala University, Krishan Karunarathne of Wayamba University of Sri Lanka and Saravanan Raju, Senior Scientist of CMFRI also presented papers on various topics.