



# THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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## Fish production falls in state; sardine catch lowest in 20 yrs

Decline by 15.4% in output raises concern about depleting marine resources

### SECTOR LOST ₹1,652 CR DURING LOCKDOWN

The Indian fisheries sector incurred a loss of as much as ₹1,652 crore in 40 days of the lockdown as fishing activities remained suspended. The sector in Kerala suffered a loss of ₹3,481 crore during the first 60 days of the lockdown. The figures do not include the loss suffered by the export and post harvest sectors.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

KERALA'S fish production declined by 15.4 per cent to touch 5.44 lakh tonnes in 2019, from 6.43 lakh tonnes in 2018, raising concerns about depleting marine resources. Sharp decline in the catch of oil sardine and Indian mackerel, the two major resources of the state, was the major factor behind the decline.

The landing of oil sardine, the state's staple fish, touched a two-decade low of 44,320 tonnes in 2019. The decline has been attributed to the warming of Arabian Sea due to the El Niño South Oscillation effect. The species' catch in Kerala had recorded an all-time high of 3.9 lakh tonnes in 2012 but dropped to 45,958 tonnes in 2016. It climbed to 1.27 lakh tonnes in 2017, before dropping to 77,063 tonnes in 2018.

As per the data released by Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) on Tuesday, India's fish landings stood at 35.6 lakh tonnes against 34.9 lakh tonnes in 2018, a marginal increase of 2.1 per cent. Tamil Nadu topped with 7.75 lakh tonnes, replacing Gujarat

which slipped to second place with 7.49 lakh tonnes.

The CMFRI data also indicated a worrying trend of a sharp increase in stocks of commercially unimportant fish species. The redtooth trigger fish, which has little demand in domestic market and is mostly caught for use in feed mills, dominated the landing with 2.74 lakh tonnes nationally, a marked increase from 72,000 tonnes in 2018.

The availability of Indian mackerel and oil sardine shrunk by 50 per cent. According to CMFRI, there was no breeding of mackerel and oil sardine along Kerala coast during breeding season this year.

The fishing sector also suffered a setback as the number of fishing days reduced due to eight cyclonic storms that disturbed the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

CMFRI director A Gopalakrishnan released the data on Tuesday in the presence of principal scientists T V Sathianandan, Prathibha Rohit, P U Zacharia, P Laxmilatha, E M Abdussamad, C Ramachandran and Josileen Jose.



Fishermen unload a catch of sardine at Muthalappuzhi harbour in Thiruvananthapuram | FILE PIC

### NUMBERSPEAK

₹60,881 cr

Value of fish caught in 2019 (Landing centre)

₹2,356 crore (Retail market)

Value of fish at landing centres in Kerala: ₹12,387 crore (20.35% increase)

Market efficiency (Fishermen share of income):

65.9% (national)

70% (Kerala)

Maximum landing: 12.1L tonnes (Oct-Dec)

### EL NIÑO AFFECTS MARINE STOCKS?

The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) causes rise in sea-surface temperature and triggers changes in the ocean's vertical, thermal structure, particularly in coastal regions. According to CMFRI, warming of sea water due to ENSO has depleted stocks of Indian mackerel and oil sardine along north and northwest Indian ocean. This warming led to a decline in fish breeding of the two species along the coasts of Kerala and Karnataka this year.

