

Despite a dip in shipments to US, India's H1 FY26 seafood exports up 17%

V Sajeev Kumar
 Kochi

Despite concerns over US tariffs, India's marine exports grew 17 per cent in the first half of the current fiscal, reaching \$3,974 million compared with \$3,385 million in the same period last year.

In September alone, shipments rose 23.4 per cent to \$781.02 million against \$632.70 million a year ago, according to quick estimates released by the Commerce Ministry.

Shaji Baby John, Chairman and Managing Director of Kings Infra, told *businessline* that the increase in exports across markets was mainly due to the Christmas and New Year demand, des-

pite a dip in the first two months of the fiscal.

He credited the growth to the joint efforts of the Commerce Ministry, the Marine Products Export Development Authority (Mpda), and the industry in expanding markets to offset the decline in US-bound shipments following the Trump-era tariffs.

NON-US AREAS

Exports to Europe, South-East Asia and the Middle East are on the rise, with shrimp gaining popularity as health-conscious consumers seek high-protein options.

Farmers, Baby John added, are now focusing on medium-sized shrimp preferred in non-US markets, rather than the larger grades that



SHIFT IN MARKETS. Higher exports to China, Vietnam and Thailand helped offset the 6 per cent decline to the United States

mainly go to the US — India's largest seafood buyer.

At an industry meet held

alongside the fourth International Symposium on Marine Ecosystems (MECOS 4) at

ICAR-CMFRI, Ram Mohan, Director of Mpda, said that while exports to the US fell

nearly 6 per cent during April-September 2025, shipments to China, Vietnam, and Thailand saw sharp growth, signalling a shift in trade dynamics towards Asian markets.

DIVERSIFICATION PUSH

Speakers at the meet called for urgent market diversification, greater value addition and technology-driven innovation to sustain growth.

George Ninan, Director of the ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIPT), said a robust start-up ecosystem is needed in the fisheries sector to integrate researchers, technologists and industry players for innovation and value creation.

Industry leaders stressed

that India must move beyond bulk raw seafood exports and exploit the vast potential in value-added products such as breaded squid rings, surimi and ready-to-eat seafood fillets.

India's current value-added seafood exports stand at \$742 million, far behind competitors like China, Thailand, Vietnam, Ecuador and Indonesia. They also recommended the setting up of exclusive aquaculture zones and fast-tracking free trade agreements to regain competitiveness.

CMFRI Director Grinson George said a roadmap is being prepared to address trade bottlenecks, promote value addition and build resilience against global market and sustainability challenges.