

CMFRI calls for mandatory traceability in fishmeal sector amid demand surge



Kochi, April 28 (IANS) The ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has called for making traceability mandatory in the fishmeal and fish oil sector, as rising demand raises concerns over sustainability and unregulated sourcing. The demand emerged at a stakeholder consultation convened by the CMFRI, where marine scientists, industry representatives and policymakers stressed that end-to-end traceability from harvest to processing to final consumption is critical to curb Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, and to ensure regulatory compliance and market credibility.

Participants warned that gaps in documentation and monitoring systems could enable unsustainable practices, underscoring the need for stronger oversight. The consultation also highlighted the importance of diversifying raw material sources to reduce pressure on conventional fish stocks. A key focus was on mesopelagic resources, deep-sea species found in midwater zones, which were identified as a promising and underutilised alternative. A pilot study led by the CMFRI, the first of its kind in India, indicated that these resources could be economically viable for fishmeal production, though experts called for further validation. “Any expansion of the fishmeal sector must be grounded in sustainability and scientific evidence. We will undertake detailed stock assessments to guide future interventions,” CMFRI Director Grinson George said.

Highlighting the broader sectoral importance, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology Director George Ninan said: “Fishmeal is integral to fisheries and aquaculture, and sustainable practices are essential not just for conservation but also for better price realisation in domestic and global markets.” Calling for policy alignment, Deputy Commissioner, Fisheries, Sanjay Pandey, urged stakeholders to adopt the national traceability framework. “Coordinated efforts between research institutions and industry are crucial to ensure transparency and accountability across the value chain,” he said.

Echoing this, Indian Council of Agricultural Research Assistant Director Shubdeep Ghosh said: “The industry must come forward to adopt transparent practices, while stronger industry research linkages are vital for developing reliable traceability systems and technologies.” With global markets increasingly prioritising sustainability and traceability, the consultation concluded that a coordinated, science-led approach is essential to balance growth in the fishmeal sector with long-term conservation of marine resources.