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ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi describes new eel species from Arabian Sea

Scientists from the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi have described a new species of conger eel from the deep waters of the Arabian Sea and named it after the Institute to mark ICAR-CMFRI's 80th anniversary year. The new species, named *Ariosoma cmfriense*, was collected from the waters off Kollam at a depth of about 300 metres in January this year.

The specimen was identified as a distinct species based on a combination of morphological characteristics and molecular evidence. It was distinguished from the 12 currently recognised *Ariosoma* species reported from Indian and neighbouring waters through detailed taxonomic examination.



These include a comparatively low total vertebral count of 135, 127–130 lateral-line pores, a preanal length of nearly half the total length, two supraorbital pores and a dorsal fin origin just ahead of the pectoral fin base. The fish also has a plain pectoral fin, a dark patch over the operculum and fine black speckling below the lateral line, a feature not observed in the other related species.

The discovery is expected to offer new dimensions to India's deep-sea research by strengthening scientific understanding about biodiversity and generating baseline information for resource conservation, said Dr Grinson George, Director, ICAR-CMFRI. The discovery was made as part of a research component under the Deep Ocean Mission (DOM), a national programme of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

The holotype has been deposited in the ICAR-CMFRI Marine Biodiversity Museum, further enriching the institute's repository of documented marine biodiversity. A scientific paper about this discovery has been published in the international taxonomic journal *Zootaxa*.