



Indian tuna safe, says CMFRI amid parasite scare

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IN an attempt to allay the concerns over a recent report regarding presence of parasites in tuna fish, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (ICAR-CMFRI) clarified on Tuesday that the tuna caught along the Indian coast was safe to consume. The CMFRI advised consumers not to avoid tuna or other commercially available fish solely based on reports of parasitic infections detected in fish from a particular region.

The advisory came in the wake of reports highlighting the presence of parasites in skipjack tuna caught from the Atlantic Ocean off Brazil. A study by scientists at the Federal University



of Santa Catarina in Brazil found that 96% of locally caught skipjack tuna were infected with parasitic worms. Social media was soon flooded with posts cautioning against consumption of tuna and fishermen raised concerns that this will lead to sharp decline in market demand.

However, CMFRI director Grinson George said they regularly examine fish and there was no report regarding enhanced presence of an intermediary host or parasites in fish caught

along the Indian coast. "Scientists at CMFRI regularly examine fish, including skipjack tuna, as part of fish biology studies and observe fish for abnormalities and parasites whenever necessary. The fish examined do not show external manifestations of harmful parasitic infestation," he said.

On the study report, the institute said findings from a particular geographical region should not be generalised. "The presence and abundance of parasites in individual fish can vary depending on ecological conditions and availability of intermediate or secondary hosts such as copepods. Because of this trait, para-

sites have been used as an indicator to differentiate fish stocks or populations globally," it said.

"Brazil borders the Atlantic Ocean in its eastern side. There can be some environmental variation in that area that provides conducive circumstances to a particular intermediary host. So a particular parasite might have flourished in that area. So there may be mass infestation if the fishes in that area. We have been studying the fish caught along Indian coast and the quality of samples was better," Grinson said. "The intestines and other viscera are normally removed during processing and cleaning. Further, proper cooking kills parasites and significantly reduces any associated food-safety risk," he noted.