

Tuna along Indian coast safe to consume: CMFRI

Kochi: Alleviating concerns over a recent study report on parasites in tuna, ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (ICAR-CMFRI) has said the tuna caught along the Indian coast don't show any harmful parasite infestation and hence are safe to consume as a healthy diet.

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 comes in the wake of reports over the presence of parasites in skipjack tuna based on a study conducted on fish from Atlantic Ocean off Brazil.

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"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 don't show external manifestations of harmful parasitic infestation," said Grinson George, CMFRI director. The institute said such findings from a particular geographical region shouldn't be generalised to tuna caught in Indian waters. The presence and abundance of parasites in individual fish can vary depending on ecological conditions and the availability of intermediate or secondary hosts such as copepods. Due to this trait, parasites have been used as an indicator to differentiate fish stocks or populations globally.

As an additional precaution for food safety, CMFRI advised that proper and quick evisceration is an important step for ensuring food hygiene. "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," George said. However, in certain countries, raw or lightly cooked seafood is consumed as a cultural practice and can be risky if the parasites' prevalence in the particular locality is high and not properly evaluated. In India, normal culinary practices with seafood involve cooking at high temperatures, he added.