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Is tuna safe to eat? ICAR-CMFRI issues clarification after parasite reports in skipjack tuna from Brazil

In a statement, ICAR-CMFRI said fish examined along the Indian coast, including tuna, had not shown any external signs of harmful parasitic infestation. Dr Grinson George, Director of ICAR-CMFRI, said scientists at the institute regularly examine fish, including skipjack tuna, as part of studies on fish biology. Parasites and other abnormalities are also checked whenever necessary. "The fish examined by the Institute do not show external manifestations of harmful parasitic infestation," he said.

Parasite presence can vary by region

The institute explained that the presence and abundance of parasites can differ between individual fish and geographical regions. Such variations depend on ecological conditions and the availability of intermediate or secondary hosts, including copepods. ICAR-CMFRI also said differences in parasite occurrence are used globally to distinguish between different fish stocks or populations. "Therefore, findings relating to fish from one geographical region cannot automatically be applied to the same species occurring in another region," it said.

Consumers advised to clean, cook fish properly

As an additional food-safety precaution, ICAR-CMFRI advised proper and prompt evisceration during fish handling and processing. The intestines and other viscera are normally removed during cleaning and processing, it said. "Proper cooking kills parasites and significantly reduces any associated food-safety risk," the institute said.

ICAR-CMFRI noted that raw or lightly cooked seafood was consumed in some countries as part of cultural practices, where the risk could be higher if parasite prevalence in a particular locality was high and had not been properly assessed. In India, seafood is generally prepared by cooking at high temperatures, providing an additional food-safety measure, it said. The institute emphasised that consumers need not avoid tuna or other commercially available fish merely because parasites have been reported in fish from a specific geographical region. Consumers should follow appropriate handling, cleaning and cooking practices to minimise potential risks while continuing to benefit from the nutritional value of fish and other seafood, it said.