

Indian seafood exporters expect US to ease restrictions on wild shrimp

Seafood exporters are pinning hopes on early easing of US restrictions on wild-caught shrimps from India following the visit by a US team to India's east and west coast regions. The United States had temporarily disallowed export of wild-caught shrimps following reports of non fixation of Turtle Exclusive Devices in the fishing nets.

US is the major market for Indian wild-caught shrimps and the restrictions had made its impact on shrimp exports, registering a 10-15 per cent drop in shipments, says exporters.

Alex Ninan, Seafood Export Association of India - Kerala region president, told Business Line that the US NOAA team (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) expressed satisfaction on the facilities adopted in the wild caught shrimp harvesting systems on the East Coast. MPEDA officials who accompanied them explained the efforts taken to protect the Olive Ridley marine turtles, the methods of harvesting systems, the types of gears used without harming the marine turtle population.

According to him, a majority of the wild-caught shrimp activities was carried out especially in Odisha and West Bengal coast with the active involvement of traditional fishermen. Though such activities are not on the West Coast, exporters suggested similar inspections in this region to observe the shrimp harvest systems. "The US team has now completed its visit and we are awaiting the final report", Ninan said.

India's marine export basket comprises of shrimps from aquaculture farms where species like Vanammei and black tiger have a good overseas demand. But wild-caught variety are small size shrimps and the species are known by the name Poovalan and Karikkadi.

Ninan pointed out that the temporary prohibition had an impact on the shrimp exports to the US, resulting in a price drop of wild caught shrimps by less than USD 5/kg from USD 5-6/kg. However, the



present situation has forced exporters to look at other markets, but the demand was low. India's shrimp exports to the US was to the tune of around INR15,000 crore (USD 1.9 billion) in which the share of wild-caught shrimps was around 11 per cent.

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