

## Indian shrimp production likely to drop this year

Shrimp production in the country, after showing a consistent growth in the last decade, is likely to drop by 10 to 15 per cent this year as low prices and fear of spread of diseases among shrimps have forced aquaculture farmers to cut production in the farms.

The stocking in the farms in south Andhra Pradesh is down by half while in north and central parts of the state, the situation is better with 80 per cent of the farms well stocked, said D Ramraj, president of All India Shrimp Hatcheries Association.

Ramraj reckons that farms in Gujarat and West Bengal too will have lower production. “The hatcheries will suffer heavy loss as we could not sell much seeds to the farmers,” he said. Last year, the shrimp production in the country went over 600,000 tonnes.

The seafood industry feels the need for sustainable aquaculture to counter setbacks and increase production. The aquaculture farmers lost money last year when white spot and EHP diseases reduced the shrimp output. This year, the fear of diseases has led many to stock less in farms, Ramraj said.

“The need of the hour is technology upgradation fund for sustainable aquaculture development,” said Shaji Baby John, chairman and managing director Kings group of companies. The recent creation of separate department for fisheries and a 2% interest subvention on loans to farmers by the Centre will go a long way in accelerating this, he said.

The group recently launched sustainable, traceable, quality certified aquaculture hub model at Tuticorin. “We are expanding this to larger areas by transferring technology developed by us to farmers covering the entire gamut of value chain, right from broodstock availability,” John said.

Shrimps account for around 70 per cent of the total seafood export from the country valued at INR 45,000 crore (USD 6.4 billion).





The industry also sought more focus on the domestic market which currently accounts for low consumption of shrimps. “Shrimps fetch better price of about INR 800-900 per kg in Delhi compared with half of it in China or other south east Asian countries,” John said. According to Ramraj, if the domestic consumption can reach 20 to 30 per cent, then it will be good for the seafood industry.

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