



## ‘Seafood exports to China have seen a 40% decline during April-December of FY21’

*India accounts for nearly 6% of the global fish production and is the largest producer of shrimps. In the previous fiscal, India exported 12,89,651 tonnes of seafood worth \$6.68 billion. In an interview with FE’s Rajesh Ravi, KS Srinivas, chairman of the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), talks about the impact of the Covid-19 on the seafood sector, and its outlook. Excerpts:*

### **Has the pandemic impacted seafood exports? Could you give us an idea about the exports in the current fiscal?**

The cumulative exports during April to January in FY 2020-21 has shown a decline of 20.54% in volume, 13.32% in rupee value and 17.01% in US\$ earnings compared to the same period last year.

### **How are seafood exports to China in the current fiscal? There are reports of containers being held up in Chinese ports and payment issues.**

In value terms (US\$), exports to China have seen a 40% decline during April-December of FY21, while volume is seen lower by 36%. The seafood inventory levels in China are reported to be very high and hence no new purchase orders are being issued. Strict Covid-19 scrutiny and additional scrutiny at local governance levels is continuing and has resulted in slow container movement and delayed payment to exporters. The advance payment given by importers are less and the final payment made only after completing the Covid-19 clearance tests. Moreover, the Chinese are suspending the processing units from exporting to China if the virus is detected in the consignment. MPEDA has taken up the exporters issues for addressing the issues at the appropriate level.



### **What are the status of sea caught fish in the fiscal and the multi-year trend?**

During the last decade, the marine fish landings are seen fluctuating within a very narrow range between 3.35 million tonne in 2010 and 3.69 million tonnes in 2019. The peak landing of 3.94 million tonne was observed in 2012, which was also the all-time high record. MPEDA through its society NETFISH is collecting boat arrival and landing details from about 100 harbours and landing centres from the entire coastline. A 30% reduction in the landings of exportable varieties are observed during the April-January 2020-21 period. Main species like cuttlefish, Indian mackerel, Sardines and squid are seen less compared to last year.

### **What about aquaculture shrimp production? Has the farmed area and production increased year-on-year?**

Shrimp production during the current fiscal has shown a marginal increase compared to the previous year's production of 6,52,626.42 tonnes. The current year shrimp production (April-December 2020-21) of 6,51,031.13 tonnes has almost reached the previous year's production figure in nine months. This fiscal area under aquaculture shrimp farming has increased by 17.84% compared to FY20.

### **How are the EU and Japanese markets responding to the quality initiatives carried out by MPEDA?**

Convinced of the quality initiatives implemented by India, Japanese authorities after on-site verification of the systems in India had initially reduced the import sampling of Indian Black Tiger Shrimp for banned antibiotic substance (Furazolidone) to 30% in March 2020 from the then existing 100%, and in December 2020, they have completely lifted the inspections. Now, Indian black tiger shrimps are subjected to routine random sampling. The recent talks with EU authorities imply that they have taken note of the systems put in place by India and that the rejections due to antibiotic residues have come down. But they will make a decision only after having a physical verification of the progress which may be possible upon relaxation of the travel restrictions due to the pandemic.



### **What about value addition in seafood exports?**

Value addition has been progressing at a slow pace in the Indian seafood exports and currently contribute only 6.95% of total export value in US\$ terms. During 2019-20 value-added products exports increased 12.06% in terms of quantity compared to last year. But the value reduced almost by 6% in rupee value and 4.14% in terms of US\$. The exporters who have ventured into value addition are less, owing to the high initial expenditure and stringent specifications involved.

### **How far have we gone in branding Indian seafood and succeeded in supermarket sales?**

Indian seafood has a presence in major supermarket chains and restaurants in more than 100 countries. Almost 95% of these are in the buyers' brand and the Indian origin of the product is confined to its traceability and least projected.

MPEDA has initiated several activities like the release of short videos through social media, TV commercials and online promotion activities for promoting the Indian seafood brand. The campaign intends to create additional demand for Indian seafood, which has been consumer-centric and targeted across a captive audience in the US.

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<https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/seafood-exports-to-china-have-seen-a-40-decline-during-april-december-of-fy21/2210855/>

