

Trawl ban key to long-term viability of Karikkadi prawn species: CMFRI

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DISPROVING the claims that the monsoon trawl ban is causing huge losses to the fishermen, a study by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has found that the trawl ban has helped to ensure the long-term viability of the Karikkadi prawn fishery along the Kerala coast, particularly by fostering species recruitment during the monsoon season.

The Karikkadi prawn (*Parapenaeopsis stylifera*) is a substantial fishery along the Kerala coast due to its high demand in domestic and international markets. Fluctuations in the karikkadi catch following the implementation of a mechanised fishing ban during the monsoon season had led fishermen to believe that unharvested prawns would be lost forever as they would move to the deeper waters.

The CMFRI's study found

Karikkadi prawn catch at the fish landing centre



that though the monsoon rains drive Karikkadi prawns to deep waters, they will be available to a depth of 100m after the trawl ban. "Monsoon rainfall drives karikkadi prawns to deeper waters due to their preference for high salinity and low temperatures. The karikkadi population in near-shore waters during the monsoon season is exclusively juveniles. Restricting fishing during this period

facilitates the continued recruitment of prawns, enabling the resources to grow in size and numbers. So the southwest monsoon trawl ban is advantageous to this species, the study observed. "Trawling activity can be focused towards 50m–100m depth during August–September to collect the resource that migrates to deeper waters during the monsoon," the study noted.