

Fish Banning Period

S. Subanesam , S. Mariappan and T. Ravikumar

Department of Fishing Technology and Fisheries Engineering Fisheries College and Research Institute Tamil Nadu, Dr.J.Jayalalithaa Fisheries University, Thoothukudi

SUMMARY

A fish ban is necessary to save marine ecosystems and guarantee the long-term viability of India's fisheries. It protects endangered species like olive ridley turtles, helps restore and grow fish populations during breeding seasons, and encourages the sustainability of fish stocks over the long run. On the other hand, the prohibition period may severely affect fishing communities' livelihoods, resulting in socioeconomic problems like dropped income, joblessness, food insecurity, and mounting debt. Notwithstanding these immediate difficulties, the fish ban's long-term advantages exceed its costs. Nevertheless, maintaining strict compliance with laws and adopting sustainable fishing methods will be essential to conserving the delicate balance and securing the future of our oceans.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Ministry of Fisheries, India has a fish production number of 175.45 lakh tons in the FY 2022-23, making India the third largest fish-producing country in the world with 8% of the global production. Fisheries contribute about 1.09% of Gross Value Added(GVA) and 6.724% to agricultural GVA. However, this exponential growth of the fisheries sector causes 12.6% of total fisheries stock to be overfished, according to ICAR-CMFRI in the year 2022-23. Thus, implementing various fisheries management tools is mandatory, including a Seasonal Fishing Ban(SFB) for protecting marine resources in India. Worldwide, fishing prohibitions are put into place in a number of locations to safeguard marine ecosystems and ensure the sustainability of fish stocks. The President of India issues fishing ban restrictions through the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying. The prohibition is set to take effect during the monsoon season when fish are most actively spawning.

History:

China was the first country to implement SFB in the world; later, SFB was adopted all over the world.

In India, under the British Colonial Period, fisheries management was governed by rules and regulations formulated under the Indian Fisheries Act(1897). After independence, the Government of India enacted the Exclusive Economic Zone Act(1977) and Marine Fisheries Regulations Act(1978), which grants the right to explore, exploit, utilise the living & non-living resources within the range of 200 nautical miles and protects from over-exploitation of marine resources, respectively. SFB is one among the various tools used in the fisheries management which is the only tool industriously followed. Previously, in India, the SFB was not uniform throughout the country with different banning periods in different states. After the intervention of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1998, the SFB was made uniform on the east coast (April 15th - May 31st) and west coast (June 15th - July 31st). Since 2015, after revisions, the banning period was extended to 60 days ranging from April 15th till June 14th on the east coast and June 1st till July 31st on the west coast. In the state of Odissa, the banning period has extended to a seven-month-long ban on fishing operations each year between November 1 and May 31. In order to protect the olive ridley turtles. This prohibition helps to overcome the entanglement of turtles from the trawl gears or net.

Ecological and Environmental Benefits:

Fish populations can recover and increase when fishing is prohibited, especially during times of breeding. This regrowth contributes to biodiversity maintenance and long-term fish stock sustainability. Coral and seabed ecosystems caught accidentally during fishing operations could also maintain their habitat from destruction during this banning period, leading to a healthier marine environment. Fish that are barred from fishing are less apprehensive about fishing gear when the prohibition is lifted, which makes them simpler to catch. This modification can potentially increase yields by improving the effectiveness of fishing activities during open seasons.

In order to safeguard the endangered Olive Ridley turtles that occasionally show up along the coast, the Odisha government has doubled the amount of financial aid given to fishermen who are impacted by the fishing ban. Starting in 2022–2023, the fisherman will receive a one-time livelihood subsidy of Rs. 15, 000 instead of Rs. 7, 500.

Impact on Fisheries:

The fish banning period is important for ecological improvement, but significantly, it can impact the livelihood of the fishermen's communities. Socio-Economic Impacts include fishermen facing loss of earnings during this period. Due to several months of lack of fishing-related employment, unemployment and food concerns arose during the banning period and increased debt by taking loans due to unemployment.

Fishing banning leads to increased illegal fishing conflicts, and a breakdown in community cohesion may result.

CONCLUSION

Since a healthy fish population supports both the environment and fishermen's livelihoods, the fish-banning period is essential to maintaining marine ecosystems and ensuring the sustainability of fisheries. By temporarily stopping fishing activities during important breeding and spawning seasons, we give fish populations the chance to recover and thrive. Although there may be short-term challenges for the fishing industry, the long-term benefits outweigh the short-term ones. Going forward, continued adherence to fish banning regulations and the adoption of sustainable fishing practices will be key to maintaining this delicate balance and ensuring the future of our oceans.

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