

Scientists, fishermen spin gizmo magic in deep seas

Data Provided To Fishermen Guides Them To The Right Fishing Zones

Our Bureau
PANAJI

CAN ancient wisdom blend with new scientific data? Well that's what's happening in Goa now.

Meet the new brand of Goa's tech-savvy fishing community. From the susegad fisherman who revel in chilled beer and good old feni while out at sea looking for a good catch, Goa's new fisherfolk no longer want to rely on ancient wisdom alone, but are willing to experiment and are in constant touch with scientists to get a good fish stock.

This new breed makes use of the latest gizmos and are willing to experiment with technology and invest in the latest equipment, if it means locating a place where ample fish is available, while saving on fuel costs as well as on time.

Take the case of Savio Furtardo, who hails from a family of fishermen in Vasco (South Goa). Life has never been so easy for this Goan lad. And unlike in the past when his ancestors spent hours looking at the sea for a good fishing area, Savio checks his digital monitor, locates an area which has good stock, and then sets sail.

"This way, you're bound to get a good catch," he says adding that if he moves fast sometimes, it could be a steal. Savio is one of the new generation fishermen who make use of scientific data to locate a potential fishing



GOLDEN CATCH

Potential fishing zone data, sent thrice a week from the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services in Hyderabad indicates good fishing areas. This is tapped by tech-savvy fisherfolk

zone (PFZ), something that's unheard of, for those frequenting the sea since ages. PFZ data, sent thrice a week by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad, indicates good fishing areas

thereby ensuring that no one returns home empty-handed.

Many countries have stressed the need for identifying potential fishing zones to help fishermen locate fish stock and to increase their catch. Over

the past decade, India too has developed a system of scientific indicators of potential fishing zones using satellite-derived information on sea surface temperature and chlorophyll to generate PFZ advisories for the Indian fishing community.

But while this data has been available for many years, it's only now that fishermen have begun to make use of it for their day-to-day activity. Hyderabad was the first city to benefit from PFZ data. Other places like Cochin, Goa, West Bengal are now following suit. According to INCOIS, these advisories help in reducing search time and the cost per unit effort of fishing, thereby resulting in significant improvement in the earnings of coastal fishermen. The state's exports too have risen many-fold in the last couple of years, as per the fisheries department. This has led to a rather sudden, demand even by smaller fisher folks for marine tools such as the fish finder, or echo sounder — which enhances the use of PFZ data. Agrees Victor Gonsalves, former chairman of Mondovi Fisheries Corporation, "Nowadays you won't get people to work for you, if you don't have good equipment," adding, "It's about competition and who gets a bigger catch. So a scientific approach is required." Currently, more than 75% of Goa's 20,000 fishermen have fitted their boats with latest gadgets along with a GPS system, and do not sail without prior information.