

## Exports and Trade of Marine Fishes in Andhra Pradesh: Driving Coastal Livelihoods and the Blue Economy

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Andhra Pradesh occupies a prominent position in India's marine fisheries sector owing to its long coastline, rich marine biodiversity, and strong export-oriented production systems. Marine fish exports from the state play a vital role in earning foreign exchange, generating employment, and supporting coastal livelihoods. Species such as shrimp, tuna, ribbon fish, pomfret, mackerel, and cuttlefish form the backbone of export trade, with major markets including the United States, European Union, China, Japan, and Southeast Asian countries. Over the years, improvements in fishing infrastructure, cold chain facilities, processing units, and quality certification systems have strengthened Andhra Pradesh's competitiveness in global seafood markets. However, the sector also faces challenges such as resource depletion, climate variability, stringent international quality standards, price fluctuations, and socio-economic constraints of small-scale fishers. This popular article discusses the status, trends, infrastructure, export markets, policy support, and challenges related to marine fish exports and trade in Andhra Pradesh, highlighting future prospects for sustainable and inclusive growth.

**Keywords:** Marine fisheries; Andhra Pradesh; Fish exports; Seafood trade; Coastal economy; Blue economy; Value chain; Sustainability.

### Introduction

India is the third-largest fish-producing country in the world, and Andhra Pradesh has emerged as one of its leading contributors, particularly in fisheries and aquaculture. With a coastline of about 974 km extending across nine coastal districts—Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, and Nellore—the state is endowed with abundant marine resources. Marine fisheries form a crucial component of the coastal economy, providing food security, employment, and income to thousands of fisher households. The state's marine fisheries sector has gradually shifted from subsistence-oriented capture fisheries to a market- and export-driven industry. Increasing global demand for seafood, especially shrimp and high-value marine fish, has positioned Andhra Pradesh as a major player in India's seafood export basket. Marine fish exports not only contribute significantly to state and national income but also support allied sectors such as processing, transportation, packaging, and international trade.

### Marine Fish Production and Resource Base

The marine fisheries of Andhra Pradesh are supported by diverse fishing grounds in the Bay of Bengal, characterized by both pelagic and demersal fish resources. Important marine fish species landed along the coast include oil sardine, Indian mackerel, ribbon fish, seer fish, pomfrets, croakers, tuna, anchovies, and cephalopods such as squid and cuttlefish.

Mechanized and motorized fishing vessels dominate marine capture fisheries, operating trawls, gill nets, purse seines, and longlines. Major fishing harbours such as Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Nizampatnam, Machilipatnam, and Krishnapatnam serve as hubs for landing, auctioning, processing, and transportation of marine fish. A substantial proportion of high-value catches is directly linked to export-oriented supply chains.

### **Export-Oriented Marine Fish Trade**

Marine fish exports from Andhra Pradesh form an integral part of India's seafood export industry. Although cultured shrimp constitutes the largest share of export earnings, marine capture fisheries also contribute significantly through frozen fish, frozen fillets, dried fish, and value-added products.

### **Major Exported Marine Species**

- Ribbon fish
- Tuna and tuna-like species
- Pomfret
- Mackerel
- Croakers
- Squid and cuttlefish
- Seer fish

These products are exported in various forms such as whole frozen fish, headless and gutted fish, fillets, steaks, and ready-to-cook items.

### **Key Export Markets**

The major international markets for marine fish from Andhra Pradesh include:

- United States of America
- European Union (Spain, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands)
- China
- Japan
- South Korea
- Middle East countries
- Southeast Asia

The demand in these markets is driven by changing food habits, preference for protein-rich diets, and the growth of restaurant and retail seafood sectors.

### **Processing, Infrastructure, and Value Chain**

The growth of marine fish exports in Andhra Pradesh has been supported by the expansion of seafood processing infrastructure. The state has a large number of export-oriented processing plants, ice plants, cold storages, and pre-processing centres, particularly in coastal districts.

Key components of the marine fish value chain include:

- Harvesting by marine fishers
- Landing and auctioning at fishing harbours
- Pre-processing (sorting, washing, icing)
- Processing and freezing
- Cold storage and refrigerated transport
- Export through seaports and airports.

Visakhapatnam port plays a crucial role in seafood exports, along with road connectivity to Chennai and Kolkata ports. Compliance with international food safety standards such as HACCP, EU regulations, and traceability requirements has become essential for accessing premium export markets.

### **Role Of Institutions and Policy Support**

Several institutions support marine fisheries development and export trade in Andhra Pradesh. These include the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), State Fisheries Department, Export Inspection Council (EIC), and fisheries research institutions.

Government initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) aim to enhance fish production, improve infrastructure, reduce post-harvest losses, and promote value addition. Financial assistance, training programs, and subsidies for fishing vessels, cold chain facilities, and processing units have strengthened the export ecosystem.

### Socio-Economic Importance

Marine fish trade and exports provide livelihoods to thousands of people along the Andhra Pradesh coast. Fishers, women engaged in fish processing and marketing, workers in processing plants, transport operators, and exporters all depend on this sector. Export-oriented growth has increased income opportunities but has also widened disparities between large exporters and small-scale fishers.

### Challenges in Marine Fish Exports

Despite its growth, the marine fisheries export sector faces several challenges:

- Overfishing and declining fish stocks
- Seasonal and climate-induced variability in catches
- Rising fuel and operational costs
- Stringent quality and safety standards in importing countries
- Price volatility in international markets
- Limited bargaining power of small-scale fishers.

Addressing these challenges requires sustainable fishing practices, improved resource management, and inclusive value chain development.

### Future Prospects and Way Forward

The future of marine fish exports from Andhra Pradesh depends on balancing economic growth with ecological sustainability. Diversification into value-added products, certification for sustainable fisheries, strengthening fisher cooperatives, and adopting digital traceability systems can enhance global competitiveness. Investments in harbour modernization, cold chain expansion, and skill development will further support export growth. Promoting responsible fishing practices and climate-resilient strategies is essential to ensure long-term sustainability of marine resources.

### Conclusion

Marine fish exports and trade play a vital role in Andhra Pradesh's coastal economy and India's seafood export performance. The state's rich marine resources, strong infrastructure base, and export orientation have positioned it as a leading contributor to global seafood markets. However, sustainable management of marine resources and inclusive growth strategies are crucial to address emerging challenges. With appropriate policy support, technological innovation, and stakeholder participation, Andhra Pradesh can continue to strengthen its position in the marine fisheries export sector while safeguarding livelihoods and marine ecosystems.

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