Demand for fish dips, but prices remain high

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

THE sale of fish in the district has seen a marginal dip in the wake of the news regarding the seizure of fish laced with formalin at the Walayar checkpoint the other day. Though the local traders attributed the dip in sales to supply crunch due to the trawling ban, most buyers said they are worried about the adulterated fish being brought to the state from other places.

"We used to buy fish regularly from the local vendors. However, the news regarding adulterated fish is really worrying. We hope the Food Safety Department will launch strict drives to make sure that only good quality fish are being sold here. It is one of the important dishes in every Malayali's platter," said Rejina P S, a homemaker.

Last week, authorities seized nearly 4,000 kg of fish at Walayar checkpoint brought from Andhra Pradesh. The seized fish mainly were prawns and shrimp which were adulterated with formalin. In other raids, 9,500 kg of prawn was seized from Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari. "Formalin, which is carcinogenic, is used to preserve fish and keep it fresh," say experts.

But fish vendors in Ernakulam attributed the dip in sales to trawling ban. "Sales have dipped since the trawling ban came into force. Due to the supply shortage, the prices have also gone high," said Jayakumar, a fish vendor at the Chambakkara Market.

"Usually, we sell the catch by the traditional fishermen through the outlets during trawling ban periods. Prices are slightly high, which is another reason for the fall in sales," he added.

He said that the price of popular items like Sardine and Mackerel have touched a high of ₹200 in the local market. Other popular fishes including Seer Fish are not available now.

"The only type of seer fish we sell now are the small variety caught by local fishermen. The price has crossed ₹1,000 due to the non-availability," he added.