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Tropical regions to be hardest hit by fisheries shifts caused by climate change

October 9th, 2009 - 3:30 pm ICT by ANI   -

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Washington, October 9 (ANI): A new study has determined that major shifts in fisheries distribution due to climate change will affect food security in tropical regions most adversely.

The study was led by the 'Sea Around Us' Project at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

It analyzed 1,066 species ranging from krill to sharks that constitute roughly 70 per cent of the world's catch.

In this first major study to examine the effects of climate change on ocean fisheries, a team of researchers from UBC and Princeton University found that climate change will produce major shifts in productivity of the world's fisheries, affecting ocean food supply throughout the world.

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"Our projections show that climate change may lead to a 30 to 70 per cent increase in catch potential in high-latitude regions and a drop of up to 40 per cent in the tropics," said lead author William Cheung, a researcher at the University of East Anglia in the UK who conducted the study while at UBC.

"Many tropical island residents rely heavily on the oceans for their daily meals. These new findings suggest there's a good chance this important food source will be greatly diminished due to climate change," he added.

The team, led by UBC Fisheries professor Daniel Pauly, also found that regions with the highest increase in catch potential by 2055 include Norway, Greenland, Alaska and the east coast of Russia.

Meanwhile, regions with the biggest loss in catch potential include Indonesia, the United States (excluding Alaska and Hawaii), Chile and China.

While greater catch potential in colder regions might appear beneficial, the researchers caution that more research is needed to account for the multitude of dynamic factors that affect every ecosystem.

“We need to keep the big picture in mind when looking at the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of climate change,” said Pauly.

“Major shifts in fish populations will create a host of changes in ocean ecosystems likely resulting in species loss and problems for the people who now catch them,” he added.

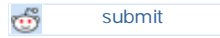
“While warmer waters might attract new species to colder regions, the rise in temperature might make the environment inhospitable to current species in the region that cannot move to even higher latitudes. Often these species are important to the diets and culture of native subsistence fishermen,” he explained. (ANI)

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