

Iceland investigating mass herring deaths

February 6 2013



Herring worth billions in exports are seen floating dead Tuesday Feb. 5 2013 in Kolgrafafjordur, a small fjord on the northern part of Snaefellsnes peninsula, west Iceland, for the second time in two months. Between 25,000 and 30,000 tons of herring died in December and more now, due to lack of oxygen in the fjord thought to have been caused by a landfill and bridge constructed across the fjord in December 2004. The current export value of the estimated 10,000 tons of herring amounts to ISK 1.25 billion (\$ 9.8 million, euro 7.2 million), according to Morgunbladid newspaper. (AP Photo/Brynjar Gauti)

Researchers in Iceland are blaming low oxygen levels in a shallow fjord for the deaths of tens of thousands of tons of herring.

Masses of dead herring have been found in Kolgrafafjordur fjord for the second time this winter, raising concerns about Iceland's fishery.

The Morgunbladid newspaper estimated the value of the 10,000 tons of fish found dead this week at 1.25 billion kronur (\$9.8 million). An even larger number of fish died in December.



Workers clear up dead herring worth billions in exports Tuesday Feb. 5 2013 from the shore of Kolgrafafjordur, a small fjord on the northern part of Snaefellsnes peninsula, west Iceland, for the second time in two months. Between 25,000 and 30,000 tons of fish died in December and more now, due to lack of oxygen in the fjord thought to have been caused by a landfill and bridge constructed across the fjord in December 2004. The current export value of the estimated 10,000 tons of herring amounts to ISK 1.25 billion (\$ 9.8 million, euro 7.2 million), according to Morgunbladid newspaper. (AP Photo/Brynjar Gauti)

Roughly one season's worth of herring has been lost, Johann Sigurjonsson, director of Iceland's Marine Research Institute, said Wednesday.

He said herring tend to winter in large populations and may have depleted the oxygen in the shallow fjord. The danger should ease in spring when the herring spread out into a wider area, he said, downplaying fears that the entire herring fishery is in danger.



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"We regard this as a serious event," he said. "We are investigating; we would like to find out if it is necessary to try to step in somehow."

The government's economic minister has increased funding for monitoring in the area to determine what can be done to prevent more fish from dying off. Some blame recent construction in the region for the kills.



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Schoolchildren, town workers and volunteers have been cleaning up the [dead fish](#), which can be turned into feed for mink and other [animals](#).

Revenue from the sale is expected to go to local children and to area schools.

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Citation: Iceland investigating mass herring deaths (2013, February 6) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-02-iceland-mass-herring-deaths.html>

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