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CMFRI plans thrust on mariculture to meet rising seafood demand

OUR BUREAU

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Giving a fillip to fish production in the country, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute will focus on popularising mariculture in all maritime States.

In its annual review meeting, the All India Network Project on mariculture (AINP-M) formulated an action plan to develop and popularise marine grow-out systems, farmer-friendly hatchery technologies for commercially important fishes, and

establishment of a centre of excellence in mariculture research.

Coordinated by CMFRI, AINP-M is a major research programme with a financial outlay of ₹42 crore, with centres from all maritime States to strengthen mariculture initiatives.

Apart from the three species — cobia, seabass and pompano — for which commercial hatchery production is currently available, CMFRI is in the process of developing technologies for

three more marine species.

CMFRI director A Gopalakrishnan said due importance would be given to popularise farming technologies and conducting demonstrations in farmers' fields.

At a time when capture fisheries production is stagnating, mariculture can be considered as the only option to meet the ever-increasing demand for marine food products.

The open sea-cage farming method developed by CMFRI is one of the best farming

models, and it can be effectively popularised among fishermen, Gopalakrishnan added.

Objective

The mariculture sector will address the ever-increasing demand for quality seafood for human consumption and, to some extent, bridge the gap between demand and supply in marine fish production, he said. Given the dwindling wild catch and limited scope for enhancing production from the fishing

sector, he said mariculture can be considered as one of the best alternative livelihood options for the fishermen community.

Since non-availability of marine finfish seed is a major challenge for mariculture, the review meeting recommended developing hatchery technology for new species for farming. It also mooted having an extensive survey on the availability of natural seeds for cage farming and determining quotas and seasons for exploitation.