

## Pizhala island village ushers in fish farming revolution

A tiny island village in Kerala's scenic backwaters is in the limelight for ushering in a fish farming revolution.

The farmers, including women's groups in Pizhala island near Kochi, yielded a mega harvest of pearl spot, seabass and tilapia in cage culture.

Around 100 farmers took part in as many as 60 cage farming enterprises under the guidance of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in Pizhala Island in Kadamakkudi Panchayat.

The farming was started seven months ago by stocking fish seeds in cages made of GI pipes with the size of four metre each width and length and six metre depth.

"During the harvest done prior to Christmas, the farmers got seabass with an average weight of 3.5 kg and pearl spot weighing 250 grams," a CMFRI official said.

He said CMFRI's Mariculture Division gave training and technical guidance to farmers at various stages, from the stocking period to the harvest, to make the enterprise a grand success.

Dr Imelda Joseph, Head of the Mariculture Division coordinated the cage fish farming in the area.

"The cage farming has been proved less expensive and economically viable," said Dr A Gopalakrishnan, CMFRI Director.

"An amount of only Rs 100 is required to produce a kg of pear spot by using cage farming method. But the farmer will get Rs 500 to 600 for a kg of live pearl spot farmed in cages", he said.

Gopalakrishnan said the fish farming revolution in Pizhala Island is a good sign that CMFRI's research output is reaching the common public.

The cage farming method developed by CMFRI was being widely adopted by fish farmers across the country, he added.

Gopalakrishnan also said CMFRI would provide all technical guidance to farmers for popularising the novel farming initiative among them.

"CMFRI will focus on boosting the eco-friendly farming models by directing the farmers to undertake the cage farming not to disrupt the ecology of the water bodies", he said.

Inaugurating the harvest, S Sarma MLA, said boosting of cage farming would help alleviate poverty in the panchayat. "The locality is surrounded by water bodies ideally suitable for cage farming. More people should come forward to take part in fish farming to utilise the prospects of water resources in the area", he said. Sarma said a proposal would be prepared to explore prospects of aqua-tourism in the panchayat.

Dr Imelda Joseph said CMFRI places emphasis on women's empowerment by attracting women groups into cage farming.