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## **Pizhala fishers set new trend in cage farming**



A View of the cage fish farming harvest in Pizhala island near Kochi. S Sarma MLA and CMFRI Director A Gopalakrishnan are seen.

**KOCHI:** At a time when capture fisheries is reeling under pressure, Pizhala, an island village in Kochi, has brought in a revolution in fish farming.

Farmers at Pizhala in the Kadamakkudi panchayat, including women groups, reaped a mega harvest of pearl spot, sea-bass and tilapia in cage culture. Around 100 farmers in multiple groups took part in 60 cage farming projects, under the guidance of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

Farming started, seven months ago, with stocking of fish seeds in cages made of GI pipe (six meter deep, four metre wide and four meter long). The farms yielded seabass with average weight of 3.5 kg and pearl spot of 250 gm.

During the different stages of cultivation, the Mariculture Division of the CMFRI imparted training and technical guidance to farmers - from the stocking stage to harvest - to make the project a success. The cage farming initiative was coordinated by Mariculture Division head Dr Imelda Joseph.

“Cage farming has proved to be economically viable. To produce one kg of pearl spot in cage farm, only ₹100 is required. The farmer will be getting ₹500-600 per kg for live pearl spot,” said CMFRI director Dr A Gopalakrishnan.

“The fish farming revolution in Pizhala is a good sign of the output of CMFRI research reaching the public,” he said, adding that the cage farming method developed by the CMFRI was adopted widely by fish farmers across the country.

He also said the CMFRI would provide all the required technical guidance to farmers for popularising the novel farming initiative. The CMFRI will focus on boosting eco-friendly farming methods by prompting farmers to take up cage farming so that the ecology of the water bodies will not be disturbed,” said Dr Gopalakrishnan.

Speaking after inaugurating the harvest, S Sarma MLA said promoting cage farming would help alleviate poverty in the Kadamakkudi panchayat. “The place is surrounded by water-bodies suitable for cage farming. More people should come forward to take part in fish farming in the area,” he said. He also pointed out that a proposal would be prepared to explore the prospects of aqua-tourism in the panchayat. According to Dr Imelda, the CMFRI has been emphasising on women’s empowerment by attracting women groups into cage farming. Kadamakkudi panchayat president Salini Babu, block panchayat member Seena Francis, ward member Prakashan, fisheries coordinator Manikandan and fish farmer Ajitha also spoke.