

CMFRI's new centre at Digha to focus on Hilsa

KOCHI: The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has opened a new regional research centre in Digha, West [Bengal](#) with an aim to fulfill the research and development needs for the marine fisheries in West Bengal and Odisha. This is the 11th regional research centre of the CMFRI, the largest fisheries research institute in the country under [Indian Council of Agricultural Research](#) (ICAR).

Research on Hilsa

The centre will primarily focus on assessing the important commercial marine fish stocks of the West Bengal including Hilsa, a popular fish variety in the region. At a time when the availability of Hilsa is showing a drastic decline in recent years, the CMFRI centre will focus on research activities for the conservation and sustainable harvest of the fish species developing effective resource management practices. The centre will provide advisories to the Bengal and Odisha governments on the optimum number of fishing vessels and the option for management of fish stocks in the State by way of regulations. Regular monitoring of marine landings and assessment of fish stocks will be carried out under the centre to help the State in managing the marine fish resources of the region ultimately benefiting the fishermen. The mariculture technologies of commercially important fishes developed by the CMFRI will be popularised and promoted in the State in tune with environmental and geographical aspects of the region.

According to Dr A Gopalakrishnan, Director of CMFRI, the new centre was established to cater to the need of marine fisheries research of the West Bengal and Odisha and generate livelihood for the coastal fisher folk. "Though sporadic research has been carried out on the marine capture fisheries and mariculture in West Bengal and Odisha, a focussed approach is lacking. It is with this intention the ICAR has helped CMFRI open a new research Centre in the State", he said. "CMFRI has been developing fisheries management plans for each maritime state. The management policy guidelines are being designed in such a way that helps in scientific management of marine fisheries for each state", he said.

"Estimates on potential yield, optimum fleet size and optimal combination of engine power and craft size will also be major contributions from the Centre to the State", he said adding that climate change issues affecting coastal habitats and fisheries could more efficiently be addressed by the new centre.

Dr Gopalakrishnan also said that the [Digha Centre](#) would also conduct capacity building and awareness programmes on conservation and management of fish resources to improve the livelihood of the fishermen community.

The other 10 Regional Research Centres of CMFRI are located in Mandapam, Chennai, Mangalore, Mumbai, Tuticorin, Visakhapatnam, Calicut, Karwar, Vizhinjam and Veraval.

Training programme

A training programme on marine cage culture was conducted at the Centre in collaboration with the West Bengal University of Animal and Fishery Sciences. A total of 54 fish farmers and fishermen from various associations of East Midnapur district participated in the training programme. The engineering and economic aspects of cage farming operations such as cage design and fabrication, operations and the policies for the farming were educated among the participants.