IN DEEP WATERS: SUSTAINING INDIA'S MARINE FISHERIES IN A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER, MULTI-SPECIES, MULTI-FLEET SCENARIO

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Indian marine fisheries generated nearly $7.08 billion in 2017 through export and provided livelihood for 14 million people of the country. Till early 1980's marine fisheries sector of the country was an open access fishery which slowly changed to restricted access fishery with introduction of Marine Fisheries Regulation Acts (MFRA) with some temporal and spatial restrictions to fishing. India's marine fisheries sector is dominated (63%), by the small-scale sector in fleet number on which about 70% active fishermen depend for sustaining their livelihoods. However, the sector is facing multiple challenges stemming from unsustainable fishing practices, habitat degradation due to coastal pollution and conflicts among its diverse stakeholders. Increase in number of fishing crafts, extension of fishing grounds and improved technological efficiency of fishing gears has to a certain extent masked the progressive creep of un-sustainability in India's marine fisheries sector. Marine fishermen of the country are competing with each other over limited, marine resources. This situation is exacerbated by the limited enforcement of regulations and ineffective monitoring mechanisms. India's marine fisheries sector, if not taken in hand immediately, could result in severe degradation of resources which would prove catastrophic for the small-scale marine fisheries sector of the country and impact livelihood of millions of people. Here in, we present the status of some exploited resources, changing techno-economic scenarios, fishers' perception on changing governance approaches and recent initiatives and proposed recommendations for ensuring sustainable and responsible marine fisheries management, which if put in place could go long way in ensuring sustainability of India's marine resources.