

## Maharashtra seeks CMFRI's support for large-scale cage fish farming

KOCHI: In a major attempt for the integrated fisheries and aquaculture development of the state, the Maharashtra government has sought technical support of the Kochi-headquartered Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) for starting largescale cage fish farming ventures.

In a meeting held at the headquarters of CMFRI in Kochi, Deepak Kesarkar, Minister of State for Finance, Planning and Home (Rural) of Maharashtra requested the CMFRI authorities to provide technical guidance to Maharashtra to launch 500 cage fish farming units in the brackishwater resources of the Sindhudurg district. Sindhudurg, a coastal district in Maharashtra, has rich brackishwater resources.

The minister said that the Maharashtra government would provide financial support to the CMFRI to help the state implement a suitable cage farming model to the ecological and geographical conditions of the brackishwater resources in the Sindhudurg district. "The cage farming models being implemented by the CMFRI in Pizhala in Ernakulam district and in the various parts of Manglore are highly successful. Maharashtra government is much eager to emulate such models in Sindhudurg district too as a better livelihood option for the coastal people", Deepak Kesarkar said.

Leena Bansod, Joint Managing Director of Maharashtra Small Scale Industries Corporation, who accompanied the minister to CMFRI visited the cage farming sites in Pizhala, an island village in Ernakulam district. She interacted with the farmers in the sites and invited them to Maharashtra to share their experiences with the farmers there so as to encourage them to take up cage fish farming enterprises.

As per the decision taken in the meeting between Maharashtra minister and his team with the CMFRI authorities, a team from the Mariculture Division of the CMFRI will visit Sindhudurg district to assess the ecological condition and carrying capacity of the water bodies prior to the launch of cage fish farming. The CMFRI team will also select ideal spots and suitable species for the farming. The CMFRI will soon submit a detailed project proposal to the Maharashtra government after reviewing environmental and geographical aspects of the region.

In addition to the cage fish farming, the Maharashtra minister also wanted the CMFRI to provide technical support to set up backyard hatchery units of cobia and silver pompano in the district to boost the farming ventures. He further requested the institute to help formulating fishing regulation for Maharashtra and to provide technical support to oyster and mussel farming. Deepak Kesarkar also sought CMFRI's guidance to establish small scale units for the depuration of oyster and mussel, besides setting up seed production units of the bivalve.

N Vasudevan, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Maharashtra also accompanied the minister. Representing the CMFRI, Dr Imelda Joseph, Head of the Mariculture Division; Dr T V Sathianandan, Head of the Fishery Resources Assessment Division; Dr K K Joshi, Head of Marine Biodiversity Division; Dr P U Zacharia, Head of Demersal Fisheries Division; Dr A P Dineshababu, Principal Scientist and Dr C Ramachandran, Principal Scientist attended the meeting.