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Mariculture zones mooted in policy

DC CORRESPONDENT
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A draft national policy on mariculture has mooted mariculture zones by demarcating special areas in sea for different activities such as cage farming, bivalve farming, pen culture, seaweed culture, hatcheries and nurseries based on scientific criteria.

The draft policy was formulated by an expert committee formed by National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) with Dr A. Gopalakrishnan, director of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) as chairman. The policy is now available for public comments from all stakeholders and interested groups.. The policy aims to enhance mariculture production in the country and increase income and employment opportunities in a sustainable way, in addition to promoting

entrepreneurship in mariculture by facilitating technical and financial inputs.

According to the policy, satellite remote sensing data and GIS will be used to identify zones for mariculture on the basis of scientific evaluation of environmental parameters suitable for farming avoiding conflict with other users and protecting local fishing communities.

Leasing and Regulation: Referring to the security of mariculture enterprises in the open sea waters, the policy has made provisions for leasing the water bodies and regulating the activities through changes in the law. All mariculture farms in sea would operate only in an area leased out for the purpose by the maritime states. In addition, the state will register and licence all farms for a specific period ensuring protection to the farm assets.