

CMFRI to address fishermen's concern over draft National Mariculture Policy

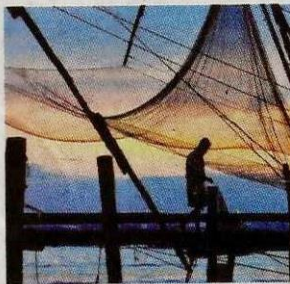
OUR BUREAU

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A stakeholder meeting at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute has decided to take steps to address the concern of fisherfolk over the draft National Mariculture Policy.

As part of this, the draft will enable a say for traditional fishermen and their cooperative societies while demarcating zones in the sea for various mariculture activities.

Allaying fears that the mariculture policy was meant to woo corporates and other industrial giants into open sea farming, the experts, who were part of the formulation of the draft National Mariculture Policy, said the draft included stringent measures to protect the interests of fishermen and



The meet also decided to consider mariculture on par with agriculture

fishing zones. The policy was meant to ensure an additional livelihood option for the fishing community at a time when the marine catch is dwindling, they said.

'Better alternative'

A Gopalakrishnan, CMFRI Director and Chairman of the committee which formulated the draft mariculture

policy, said the country would require five million tonnes from mariculture production alone to meet the food demand in 2050.

"We cannot always depend on marine capture fishery to meet the food demand and to protect the livelihood of the fisher community. Mariculture is a better option to increase marine food production and to improve the living standards of the fishermen. A systematic mariculture practice is required to realise these goals," he said, adding that a national-level policy was the need of the hour to promote mariculture enterprises.

The meet, which was attended by representatives of fishermen, boat owners, fish farmers, seafood exporters and hatchery entrepreneurs along with marine scientists

and Fisheries Department officials, also decided to consider mariculture on par with agriculture so that benefits could be availed from the government and the banking sector. This will be incorporated in the draft policy.

Stringent measures

Mariculture activities include cage fish farming, bi-valve farming, pen culture, seaweed culture, and hatcheries and nurseries based on scientific criteria.

In addition, stringent measures will be incorporated in the draft policy to protect marine ecology. The meeting suggested that State governments be tasked with measures to curb all kinds of organic pollution emanating from cage fish farming in open sea water.