



Fishers' rights will be protected under mariculture policy: CMFRI

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REFUTING the allegations that the aim of the mariculture policy was to lease out open sea to corporate entities, the scientists at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) said the draft included stringent provisions to protect the interests of fishermen.

The policy envisaged to ensure an additional livelihood option to the fishermen community at a time when marine fishery was facing stagnation, said CMFRI Director A Gopalakrishnan, who was also the chairman of the committee which formulated the draft policy. He was speaking at the stakeholders' meet here on Saturday to address the concerns of the fishermen community regarding the draft national mariculture policy.

A suggestion will be incorporated in the draft policy to enable traditional fishermen and their cooperative socie-

ties to obtain priority while mariculture zones are demarcated in the sea for mariculture activities, he said.

The country requires a production of five million tonnes from mariculture alone to meet the food demand in 2050, said Gopalakrishnan.

"We cannot always depend on marine capture fishery to meet the food demand and to protect of the livelihood of fishermen community. Mariculture is a better alternative to increase marine food production. 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 in the country.

The meet also decided to

consider mariculture on par with agriculture to ensure financial benefits from government and banking sectors. This will be incorporated in the draft policy. Representatives of fishermen, boat owners, fish farmers, seafood exporters, hatchery entrepreneurs, marine scientists and Fisheries Department officers participated in the meet.

The meeting suggested that state governments should be entrusted with the task of taking measures to curb all kinds of organic pollution emanating from cage fish farming in open sea water. The stakeholders may submit their detailed suggestions and proposals based on the draft policy on or before December 27.



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-A Gopalakrishnan, CMFRI Director