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# Booster shot for the Blue Economy

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Amid slowing growth in the marine fisheries sector, the Budget initiatives are expected to boost fish production and reinvigorate the country's fisheries economy.

The sector is presently faced with problems of excess fishing capacity, low catch per unit effort, wide income disparities among the sectors of the fishing community and resultant socio economic conflict.

The stagnant sea production warrants the need for expanding the aquaculture sector to meet the requirements of the growing population. A Ramachandran, Vice Chancellor, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) told *BusinessLine*.

With over exploitation of

resources and excess fishing pressure in the coastal waters, he said, the target of increasing fish production from the present 140 lakh tonnes to 200 lakh tonnes by 2022 is possible only with concerted efforts in the aquaculture sector.

Both State governments and the private sector have a role to play in grabbing the opportunity for aquaculture expansion by identifying the appropriate species for different regions. Production can be increased by both area expansion and productive use of the current 172,000 hectares of ponds.

## Supply chain support

India stands second in fish production in the world, with a total production of 13.7 mt in 2018-19, of which 65 per cent was from the inland

sector, said Ramachandran.

The Budget allocation will also help overcome the weakness in the supply chain. The main constraint in fish utilisation in India is the lack of proper cold chain transport network connecting the landing centres to the processing, marketing and consumption centres, he added.

P Shinoj, senior scientist at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, said cage farming, seaweed mariculture and other associated segments can be looked at to bring a quantum jump in production.

On the setting up of 500 fish farmers producer organisations, he said the FPO's in the agricultural sector has been set up with a view to instil professionalism in primary production.