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Disadvantaged families report solid profits from CMFRI aquaculture initiative

A group of fish farmers from a marginalised community in Kerala has reported a profitable year, thanks to a bumper harvest of pearl spot (*E.suratensis*) from their cage fish farming venture.



The cage farming project was part of a special programme of the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)

A self-help group from the village of Maradu, named Puzhayoram reported a yield of 600 kg of pearl spot from a 4x4m cage installed in Maradu-Nettoor backwaters. The cage farming project was part of a special programme of the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). The harvest was inaugurated by Adv Reshmi Sanil, vice chairperson of Marad Municipality.

“The harvested fish were completely sold out on the spot and the SC families in the region reaped a profit of Rs. 2,73000 from a 10-month long farming that started in October last year by stocking 2,000 seeds of pearl spot,” said Dr K Madhu, principal scientist of the CMFI and the principal investigator of the project, in a press release.

According to Dr Madhu, the fish attained an average weight of 380g, with a 95 percent of survival rate and sold for Rs. 450 per kg. As part of the programme, the ICAR-CMFRI had provided the group with cages, juveniles and feed for the entire farming period, free of cost, while the researchers from the institute guided the farmers during all the phases of production.

“With no income and unemployment, the Covid-19 pandemic and following lockdown had a cascading effect on the lives of the SC families in the region. However, the cage farming venture has helped them sustain their livelihood to a certain extent,” Dr Madhu said, adding that besides cage farming, pen culture and biofloc fish farming were also in progress for the community in different parts of the state.

Speaking on the occasion of harvest, Dr A Gopalakrishnan, director of ICAR-CMFRI, said: “The cage farming technology and other fish farming activities of CMFRI have proved its potential to accelerate the pace of development of the SC and ST families, and for their socio-economic development. The institute is always focused on empowering the marginalized section of the society through small-scale enterprises by extending its technologies to them.”

“Many fish farmers in poor backgrounds in the country are greatly benefitted through CMFRI’s SCSP and Tribal Sub Plan programmes, which are aimed at mainstreaming the marginalised community. Efforts are also in progress to extend support to the transgenders in SC and ST community in a way that helps them earn a living through cage fish farming and allied activities,” he added.