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Lakshadweep to launch large-scale farming of seaweed for pharma, food and nutraceuticals

KOCHI: After initiating steps to improve fish exports and promote eco-tourism projects, the Lakshadweep administration has identified seaweed farming as the next potential sector for employment generation. A massive demonstration of seaweed farming was launched in nine inhabited islands of Lakshadweep with the technical support of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

The initiative is based on a CMFRI study that revealed immense potential for production of quality seaweed in the serene and pollution free lagoons of Lakshadweep for high-end utilisation in production of pharmaceutical products, food and nutraceuticals.

The administration has started farming species like indigenous red algae, Gracilaria edulis and Acanthophora spicifera in nearly 2500 bamboo rafts involving 10 women's self-help groups which will benefit 100 families.

“Lakshadweep is known for its unique tuna fisheries, beautiful corals and reef fishes. Now the island is set to grow into a hub of seaweed farming in the country,” said CMFRI scientist K. Mohammed Koya.

A study by the CMFRI revealed the huge potential of indigenous seaweed farming in various lagoons of Lakshadweep. In view of the report, the Lakshadweep administration joined hands with the CMFRI for multi-locational trial farming and capacity building of stakeholders. The experimental trial farming was conducted in the islands of Kiltan, Chetlah Kadmath, Agatti and Kavaratti during 2020-21 with promising results.

“The studies revealed that the island territory has a potential of producing nearly 30,000 tonnes of dry seaweed worth Rs 75 crore per year by farming only 1 percent of its 21,290 hectares of lagoon area of inhabited islands,” said Mohammed Koya.

Terming it a climate-smart initiative, he said seaweeds are well known for their carbon sequestration properties. "The large-scale farming of seaweed would sequester nearly 6500 tonnes of carbon dioxide per day adding a huge carbon credit to the nation while providing a climate resilient livelihood to the islanders," he said.

Aiming to provide a sound scientific basis for sustainable seaweed farming, the CMFRI and the Lakshadweep Krishi Vigyan Kendra are conducting further studies for assessing the carrying capacity of the lagoons, spatial mapping of suitable farming sites, standardising farming methods and means to ensure quality seeding materials.