

## Biofloc tilapia farming set to help India's rural poor



India's Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) is helping scheduled caste (SC) families become small-scale entrepreneurs through biofloc production of tilapia in Cheranellur, Ernakulam.

CMFRI provided is helping members of five SC families in the area to launch a biofloc fish farming unit under the scheme of Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP). The group began by stocking 1,800 genetically improved tilapia (GIFT) fry into a biofloc tank, set up adjacent to their households.

CMFRI's assistance includes setting up the 23,500 litre tank and providing the fry, feeds and technical guidance.

According to CMFRI, the self-help group will be able to earn an income of at least 135,000 rupees (roughly \$1,800) from each 8-month cycle, and the fish will attain a minimum weight of 300 g.

"Normally tilapia (GIFT) gains 300 to 500g weight during this period from this practice," said Dr K Madhu, principal investigator of the project and principal scientist of CMFRI.

Biofloc allows for high-density fish farming in a controlled environment, in which fish wastes are converted into useful nutrients.

The CMFRI will monitor different phases of the practice continuously to enable maximum fish growth. A water quality kit also was supplied to the group to maintain the required parameter, Dr Madhu said.

Under the SCSP scheme of the CMFRI, cage fish farming is being undertaken by members of the SC community across the country, and biofloc farming is aimed at to extend the benefits of this scheme to those who do not have access to open water bodies. The biofloc project is underway in Palakkad, Thrissur, Idukki, Kottayam and Kollam districts under CMFRI's guidance. The tilapia fry were procured from MPEDA's hatchery in Vellarpadam.