Black clams released in Kerala's Vembanad Lake to boost incomes of inland fishermen

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KOCHI: A project launched by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) to rejuvenate black clam resources in the Vembanad Lake has helped enhance the incomes of inland fishermen.

The CMFRI had released baby clams in the Vembanad Lake aiming to increase production. This has helped fishermen harvest around 10 tonnes of clam per day from two locations in the lake.

The Molluscan Fisheries Division of CMFRI had released baby clams on the northern side of the Thanneermukkom Barrage in a bid to improve clam production and enhance the livelihoods of fishermen. The fisheries department also joined hands with the project by including it in the district panchayat scheme. Approximately 200 tonnes of baby black clams were released in Keecheri and Chakkathukadu areas of the Vembanad Lake under the technical guidance of CMFRI.

According to scientists at CMFRI, the initiative is expected to provide a yield of nearly 1500 tonnes from these sites which is more than seven times the quantity of baby clams released in the lake. The long undisturbed period of nearly two years has facilitated at least two spawnings followed by spat settlement leading to the establishment of a new black clam bed in the lake thus enhancing the clam resource, said CMFRI scientist P Laxmilatha.

"The production of black clams in Vembanad Lake had peaked to 75,592 tonnes in 2006 after which there was a steep decline to 42,036 tonnes in 2019. Fishermen under the Keecheri Ulnadan Matsya Thozhilali Sahakarana Sangham collect the clams using canoes and sell clam meat at the rate of 150 per kg. Each canoe collects 450 kg of clams per day.

Apart from increasing the production of clams in the area, the project helped clam fishermen sustain their livelihood during the tough pandemic period, said scientist Vidya R.