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# Water hyacinth poses threat to cage fish farming

## KVK conducts drive to remove plant from aquaculture farms

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The Ernakulam Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) has stepped in to create awareness on water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) invasion of waterbodies, which is increasingly posing a threat to cage fish farming enterprises in the backwaters.

Unlike the usual trend of water hyacinths decaying by October, the aquatic plant is still seen rampant in the backwaters now, following extended monsoon and release of water from dams. Normally, water hyacinths dominate the water bodies during the July-August period in tandem with the monsoon run-off water and begin to decay as salinity levels in the backwaterswaters increase.

The plant emerges as a threat mostly to cage aquaculture as it considerably reduces water flow in fish cages installed in the backwaters. Reduced water flow results in reduction in



**Damage control:** Ernakulam KVK, with the participation of fish farmers, engaged in a cleaning drive to remove water hyacinth from cage farming sites at Ezhikkara backwaters.

oxygen levels, leading to fish kill. This is a troubling situation for the fish farmers, who depend heavily on cage farms as their livelihood means, said Shinoj Subramanian, head of the KVK. Water hyacinth also acts as a breeding ground for parasites and other hazardous organisms that spread diseases among fish, he said. In order to tackle the issue, the KVK, functioning under the Central Marine Fisheries Research

Institute (CMFRI), has launched an awareness campaign on the bad effects of water hyacinth on fish production and the method to remove them from the water bodies.

In line with the campaign and as part of Swatchtha Pakhwada, a massive cleaning drive was conducted at Ezhikkara in Paravur taluk of Ernakulam district, by engaging young fish farmers to remove the water plants from an area of two acres.