

India identifies 146 potential sea farming sites along its coastline

The newly identified sites form part CMFRI's plans to boost marine aquaculture production – with the sea cages producing up to 2.13 million tonnes of fish each year.



Aimed at empowering the coastal population through additional livelihood options, the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has envisaged plans to boost mariculture activities across the coastal states of the country.

Announcing the plan at the launch of a 21-day Winter School on

mariculture for researchers and academicians at the CMFRI, director Dr A Gopalakrishnan said: “CMFRI has identified and geo-referenced 146 potential sites for sea cage farming within 10 km in the sea from the coast along the Indian coastline, with a production potential of 2.13 million tonnes per year. In these, four sites from Kerala in an area of nearly 1300 hectares.” Earlier, the institute had identified 342 potential sites for seaweed farming with a production potential of 9.7 million tonnes (wet weight) in a year.

Up to 3 tonnes of fish production per cage

“CMFRI has developed and standardised indigenous sea cage farming technology suitable to Indian coastal and open waters. On average, up to 3 tonnes of fish could be produced in a 6-diameter cage within a period of 8 months. CMFRI has estimated that farmers could earn an economic return ranging from Rs. 1.5 to 2.5 lakh (approx \$1,800 to \$3,000) depending on the species grown from each crop,” he said. Apart from sea cage farming, technologies for seaweed farming and integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) – an innovative practice combining seaweed and mussel farming with cage fish farming – have been proved successful by CMFRI for income multiplication and employment empowerment among the coastal people of the country, Dr Gopalakrishnan said. Developing appropriate technology with good vision will help transform the quality of life of people even living in rural areas.

Dr Kuldeep K Lal, director of ICAR-Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA) Citing the status of India’s mariculture, the CMFRI director said the current mariculture production from India is less than 0.1 million tonnes per year against a projected potential of 4 to 8 million tonnes. “Successful expansion of inland and brackishwater aquaculture in the country could be capitalised to boost mariculture production in a phased manner,” he added. Dr Kuldeep K Lal, director of ICAR-Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA) who inaugurated the Winter School urged scientists to focus on indigenous technologies and local fish varieties that would bring prosperity to the common people. “Developing appropriate technology with good vision will help transform the quality of life of people even living in rural areas,” he said.

The 21-day Winter School is aimed at popularising CMFRI’s mariculture technologies by imparting training to a diversified group of researchers from different parts of the country. A total of 22 researchers from seven states are attending the programme. Dr Imelda Joseph, course director of the Winter School, said popularising the mariculture technologies would offer employment opportunities to the coastal community and make way for female empowerment.