THE HINDU 07 February 2023

CMFRI identifies 146 sites for sea cage farming along Indian coast

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has identified 146 sites for sea cage farming along the coast of India with a projected production potential of 2.13 million tonnes a year. The project is aimed at empowering the coastal population through additional livelihood options.A communication from ICAR-CMFRI said the plans for expanding marine fish culture was announced at the launch of a 21-day Winter School on mariculture for researchers and academics at the institute. CMFRI Director A. Gopalakrishnan, who made the announcement said, “The 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.”

Among the sites, there are four from Kerala in an area of nearly 1,300 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, the communication added.The CMFRI has developed and standardised indigenous sea cage farming technology suitable to Indian coastal and open waters. On an average, up to three tonnes of fish could be produced in a six-diameter cage within a period of eight months. The CMFRI has estimated that farmers can earn an economic return ranging from ₹1.5 to ₹2.5 lakh depending on the species grown from each crop. Apart from sea cage farming, technologies for seaweed farming and integrated multi-tropic aquaculture, an innovative practice combining seaweed and mussel farming with cage fish farming has been proved successful by the CMFRI for income multiplication and employment empowerment among coastal people, Dr. Gopalakrishnan said.

Citing the status of India’s mariculture, he said the current mariculture production in India was less than 0.1 million tonnes a year as against a projected potential of four to eight million tonnes. Successful expansion of inland and brackish water aquaculture in the country can be capitalised to boost mariculture production in a phased manner, he added.Kuldeep K. Lal, director of ICAR-Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture, 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 living in rural areas,” he said.