

Experts want Indo-UK partnership to attain 'One Health Aquaculture' concept



Kochi, Feb 22 (IANS) Fishery scientists and experts from India and the UK have called for an Indo-UK partnership to achieve the 'One Health Aquaculture' concept in the country. One Health Aquaculture approach implies achieving optimal health of the people, aquatic animals and plants, and the environment. Speaking on the concept at an Indo-UK joint workshop held here, experts said that while focusing on boosting production to meet growing seafood demand, it is equally important to improve the health of all involved in the value chain of the aquatic food sector.

The workshop was jointly organised by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) of the UK government, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). The meet also called for Indo-UK partnership to facilitate research collaboration helping to improve safe and sustainable aquaculture production in the country. This would help to support adoption of sustainable seafood practices, reducing the risk of negative impacts from unsustainable activities and subsequently improving the livelihoods, environments, and economies of the country.

Sally Taylor from the British High Commission said a higher level UK-India One Health partnership would set stage for the integration of the aquatic food system to One Health concept thereby addressing emerging realities and concerns at global level. The meeting also suggested novel initiatives like block-chain enabled tracking of fish production from farm to table as it helps improve the quality of the produce.

CMFRI Director, A Gopalakrishnan said, there are mechanisms that orient Indian aquaculture towards the One Health paradigm like National Surveillance Programme for Aquatic Animal Diseases (NSPAAD), Indian Network for Fisheries and Animal Antimicrobial Resistance (INFAAR), All India Network Project on Fish Health, Consortia Research Platform on Vaccine and Diagnostics. However, he underscored the need for creating a national level agency to coordinate such different fragmented efforts. Referring to the increased disease risks involved in the aquaculture, C Ramachandran, Principal Scientist of the CMFRI said it is need of the hour to appoint aqua doctors to prevent abuse of chemicals like antibiotics in aquaculture. "Collaborative R&D efforts are required for revival and market integration of traditional fish farming systems such as pokkali farming under the One Health lense," he said. Around 50 scientists from India and the UK attended the meeting.