

Mariculture offers good business prospect for India's coastal region: CMFRI study

V Sajeew Kumar
Kochi

Mariculture has emerged as a promising business opportunity for India's coastal regions, offering decent income to the coastal people even as extreme weather events like cyclones are leading to the reduction of fishing days every year, according to a new study by the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

Cage fish farming in the open sea and coastal waters could yield an additional income of up to ₹3 lakh per unit, the study found. The study examined the social, environmental, technical and economic aspects of 159 mariculture units such as cage farming, seaweed cultivation and Integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA) in six coastal States including Kerala.



DEEP DIVE. A fish farmer with cobia fish harvested from sea cage farming

The innovative practice of IMTA, which combines mussel or seaweed cultivation with cage fish farming, was found to generate even higher profits of ₹3.25 lakh per unit.

Profitability in coastal water cage farming was higher in Kerala compared to other coastal States, with nearly 40 per cent of such units in the State generating an income ranging from ₹2 lakh to ₹3 lakh per season. Andhra Pra-

desh realised greater profitability in open sea cage farming, while the IMTA practice was found to be more profitable in Tamil Nadu.

ROADBLOCKS

The CMFRI study also identified challenges in the sector, including the scarcity of quality seed and feed. Less than 50 per cent of farmers received good-quality seed for culture. Limited access to institutional credit to meet

capital and the operational cost was reported to be another major constraint in the sector.

“Adequate legislative mechanism is required to ensure legitimate access for farmers to open water bodies. Respective State governments should intervene to provide this protection to farmers so that production could be augmented,” said Shinoj Parappurathu, senior scientist of the CMFRI.

The study proposes strengthening food safety protocols and health management systems in mariculture farms; developing marine spatial plans for the optimal allocation of available ocean space; bringing about market reforms for the development of competitive value chains; introducing specialised schemes to support auxiliary prerequisites such as credit, insurance, and other support services.