

AI can help address challenges in marine fisheries, says NITI Aayog VC

Kochi: The application of frontier technologies like artificial intelligence could help address the challenges in the marine fisheries sector, NITI Aayog Vice Chairman, Suman Bery, said here on Friday. Inaugurating a national workshop on harnessing the potential of fisheries in the marine states, Bery emphasised the role of technology as a vital growth driver.

The workshop was organised at the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in association with Kerala Fisheries Department. Bery stressed the importance of understanding the dynamics of demand for prioritising production strategies. "Application of frontier technologies like artificial intelligence could help address the challenges in the marine fisheries sector. Given that demand for fish is on the rise, innovative strategies to enhance productivity are required," Bery said, adding that demand is the driving force of the economy.

The workshop was held to discuss relevant issues in marine fisheries, develop tailored strategies, and forge partnerships between the coastal states to address the challenges and explore the prospects. Flagging concern about the increasing trend of disparity between the states, NITI Aayog member, Ramesh Chand, said the growth of fisheries is highly imbalanced, while it is much higher in Andhra Pradesh compared to most other maritime states. "Fish production in Andhra Pradesh is 50 per cent higher than the total production of five states, namely Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka combined," he said. He also said that the growth of demand for fish doubled in the past decade ending 2022, compared to the previous decade ending 2012.

Chand proposed enhancing value addition and cutting-edge processing innovations to boost seafood export. "Major chunks of India's unprocessed seafood including shrimps and tuna are exported mainly to Vietnam, Thailand and Tunisia for onward re-export from there after substantial value addition. By setting up state-of-the-art processing facilities, India can harness the unexplored value-addition potential of seafood for earning greater foreign exchange," he added.

Dr J K Jena, Deputy Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) pitched for exploring the untapped potential of oceanic and deep-sea resources. Representatives from the governments of West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andaman and Nicobar took part in the discussions. A diverse array of key stakeholders, including policymakers from the Central and state governments, leading industry experts and researchers attended the workshop which provided a platform for experience sharing between marine states, enabling open dialogue on the challenges faced and potential solutions. NITI Aayog Joint Secretary K S Rejimon, Senior Advisor Neelam Patel, Senior Consultant Babitha Singh and CMFRI Director A Gopalakrishnan spoke on the occasion.