AI could help address challenges in marine fisheries, says NITI Aayog Vice Chairman

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The application of frontier technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) could help address challenges in the marine fisheries sector, Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog Suman Bery said in Kochi on Friday, while emphasising the role of technology as a vital growth driver in the 'sunrise' sector.

Speaking after inaugurating a national workshop on the potential for developing the fisheries sector in different States, organised jointly by NITI Aayog, ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) and Kerala Fisheries department at CMFRI in the city, he stressed the importance of understanding the dynamics of demand to prioritise production strategies.

Rise in demand

Given that demand for fish was on the rise, innovative strategies to enhance productivity were required, said Mr. Bery.

The workshop discussed issues facing the

NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery

fisheries sector, the need to develop tailored strategies and to forge partnerships between coastal States to address challenges and to explore growth prospects.

Disparity in production

Flagging concerns over the increasing disparity between States in fish production, member of NITI Aayog Ramesh Chand said the production of Andhra Pradesh was 50% higher than the combined production of five States, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

There was tremendous scope for all States, since demand for fish doubled in the decade ending 2022, compared to the decade before that.

Moreover, the fisheries sector has a promising export share among agriculture and food commodities.

Value addition

He proposed the augmenting of value addition and the need for cutting-edge processing innovations in the sector.

"A major chunk of India's unprocessed seafood, including shrimp and tuna, is exported mainly to Vietnam, Thailand and Tunisia for onward re-export from there after substantial value addition.

"By setting up of state-of-the-art processing facilities, India can harness the unexplored value-addition potential of seafood for earning greater foreign exchange.

"Partnerships between fishers and the industry, investment and marketing, too were needed," said Mr. Chand.

The Deputy Director General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) J.K. Jena cited the need to explore the untapped potential of oceanic and deep sea resources. The estimated harvestable potential of 2.1 million metric tonnes (MT) of oceanic and deep sea resources offered a potential new frontier for commercial fisheries, he said and emphasised the importance of ensuring quality and also enhancing skill of stakeholders to utilise the prospects of deep sea fishing.

Representatives from West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andaman and Nicobar took part in the discussions.

An array of key stakeholders, including policymakers from the Central and State governments, industry experts and researchers too attended the workshop.

NITI Aayog Joint Secretary K.S. Rejimon, Senior Advisor Neelam Patel, Senior Consultant Babitha Singh and CMFRI Director A. Gopalakrishnan were among those who spoke.