

# Deep Sea Fishing Policy of India needs Reorientation Towards Community Participation

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Marine fisheries form an important sector of the Indian economy. The Indian Exclusive Economic Zone is about 2 million km<sup>2</sup> as against the land area of about 3.2 million km<sup>2</sup>. As against the estimated annual potential of 3.9 million tonnes of fish, which itself is subject to change every year depending on various factors, the Indian EEZ currently yields about 2.9 million tonnes of fish (1997-98). About 10 lakh fishermen are engaged in active marine fishing out of which the contribution of artisanal sector is about 13%, motorised sector 19% and small scale mechanised sector 68% of our total marine fish production. In effect currently 20% of active fishermen harvest about 68% of the total fish production and the inequality among coastal fisherfolk is widening faster with the marginalisation of traditional fishermen. There is no scope to increase our fishing pressure in our inshore waters as there is excess capacity in traditional and small scale mechanised sectors. Further, many of the existing mechanised boats are extending their fishing upto 100 meters of depth resorting multiday fishing operations. Hence our Deep Sea Fishing Policy (DSFP) should be re-oriented to exploit the fishery resources beyond 100 metres depth giving thrust to indigenous technology and more employment generation for coastal fisherfolks to avoid social conflicts.

## Constraints:

1. Deep sea fishing is so far highly linked with the harvest of exportable varieties.
2. Lack of adequate information on the stock assessment of deep sea resources in different regions of the oceans and the optimum fleet sizes of different categories to be deployed.

3. The economic viability of various categories of deep sea vessels are not yet established beyond doubt.

4. Capital intensive deep sea fishing technologies adopted so far are not cost effective.

5. Mounting discards of low value fish from multiday fishing units and deep sea fishing vessels.

6. Near lack of involvement of coastal fisherfolk in deep sea fishing.

7. Lack of monetary incentives to bring fin fishes for internal marketing.

8. Inadequate monitoring of deep sea fishing by governmental agencies.

## Suggestions:

1. Deep sea fishing should be intensified by encouraging the fishermen to adopt 'dory type' of fishing in which a series of indigenous boats are involved for fishing, transportation of catch, material and fishermen.

2. As far as possible the fishing vessels should be designed and built in India suiting to local conditions, equipping by and large with Indian made machinery for less capital investment and to promote internal employment opportunities.

3. Medium sized vessels ranging 20 - 25 m OAL (trawlers, gill netters, long liners and purse seiners) in limited numbers should be introduced for operation in 100 m depth and beyond in different regions and their bio-economic feasibility should be assessed before increasing their numbers in a phased manner.

4. Few sample vessels of larger size (above 35 m) capable to fish beyond 200 m depth in our EEZ and International waters should be introduced and economic viability

assessed before increasing its fleet strength.

5. A few Deep Sea Fishermen Societies (DSFS) can be organised in different regions of the coast and on their collective responsibility finances should be provided on easy terms and conditions to procure the above said medium and large vessels in the introductory stages to avoid socio-economic conflicts among coastal fisherfolks.

6. Adequate monetary incentives should be given by Govt. to the DSFS for bringing fin fishes for internal marketing.

7. Code of conduct should be evolved for the deep sea fishing vessels.

Fishermen all along our coastal belt feel that their traditional fishing rights in the ocean are threatened over the years with technological changes and over capitalisation. The efforts taken by Govt. through various measures so far to strengthen our deep sea fishing fleets also failed. Hence it is appropriate to involve the fishermen through DSFS for harvesting the under exploited deep sea resources for the balanced development of coastal economy.

