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MY VISION ON INDIAN FISHERIES OF THE 21st CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

In evaluating important producers in the next decade, the FAO predicts that India, China and Indonesia will be the countries with largest potential. All over the world, it has been found that small and marginal land owners are the most successful. So a modified and indigenised technology utilised by local small land owners would help to focus attention at the micro level to increase productivity on the whole. In small scale units, initial investment for construction and equipment as well as operational costs are very low. When problems occur, production can be discontinued without undue expense. This is in contrast to large scale corporate bodies where sophisticated systems, cost of wages, power supply, supporting facilities and other overheads still have to be borne during the closure. This also leads to an indirect wastage of valuable manpower due to frustrations among skilled and unskilled labour. Small scale units also enjoy the advantage of flexibility where the system can be adapted to grow different species. This sector has to be encouraged to come to the forefront.

India is endowed with rich natural resources and with the right technology for development. What we need is a genuine comprehension of this natural goldmine, a single minded devotion to develop this industry, by smoothening out the rough edges. We can then witness an all round exponential growth.

India stands, therefore, on the threshold of a revolution in transforming coastal economics and contributing dramatically to its export earnings. We need to maintain a positive viewpoint of our prospects and strive hard to be the best in the forthcoming century.

1. INTRODUCTION

Centuries ago, man in his struggle for survival, learnt both the concepts of co-existence and fishing. Since then, in the history of mankind's evolution, at every stage, knowledge was gained, knowledge was shared, and through synthesis, a better world emerged. As the potential scientific and technical knowhow of the 21st century, in the field of fisheries, it is our moral duty as students and research scholars to use the acquired knowledge wherever suitable, to ensure the best future for our country in the fisheries section.

Increase in productivity and production would be one of the continuing programmes of the 9th plan, suggesting a total annual production of 63.67 lakh tonnes of fish by the next century. We must realistically examine the possibilities

of achieving this envisaged target, considering the resources availability, potential, constraints and a rational demand in terms of nutritional requirements, income generation, foreign exchange earnings, as well as judicious utilisation of land and water resources.

2. FISHERIES AS SMALL SCALE SECTOR UNITS

All over the world, it has been found that small and marginal land owners are the most successful. So, a modified indigenous technology utilized by local aquafarms would help focus attention at the micro level to increase production and productivity on the whole. In small scale units, initial investment for construction and equipment as well as operational cost are very low. When problem occurs, production can be discontinued without undue expenses. This is in contrast to large scale corporate undertakings, where sophisticated systems, cost of wages, power supply, supporting facilities and other overheads still have to be borne during the closure. This also leads to an indirect wastage of valuable manpower, due to frustration among skilled and unskilled labourers. Small scale units also enjoy the advantage of flexibility where the system can be rotated and adapted to grow different species at different times, according to demand and profitability. This sector therefore has to be encouraged to come to the forefront.

3. WASTE WATER MANAGEMENT

The utilisation of fallow and derelict waterbodies for fish culture as has been done in some states, notably in West Bengal should be encouraged fully on a commercial scale aided with subsidies from the government. These water bodies can also be profitably beautified for sport fisheries. The use of eco-friendly management strategies such as the concept of biofertilization and herbal remedial measures will help to create an 'ecosystem with no waste', which will be a boon in today's heavily polluted biosphere. The construction of bioponds shall also help to nullify the effects of problem chemicals and pave the way for natural effective waste water management.

4. CONSTRAINTS AND STRATEGIES

4.1 Absence of clearcut government policy

One of the major drawbacks of the fisheries sector is the absence of a clearcut government policy demarcating agricultural and aquacultural land. The recent public interest litigation framed against coastal aquaculture took shape primarily because, in coastal states, all lands, including the unproductive ones, are put under agricultural category in revenue records. There is no mention of

aquacultural category. This is why records everywhere show conversion of agricultural lands into aquaculture farms. It is therefore, desirable for all policies to be framed considering social and economic viability as well as environmental sustainability beside the need for an aquaculture land policy.

4.2 Deepsea fishing policy

A sound deepsea fishing policy, revolving around the upgradation of capabilities of small scale fishermen having skills but no funds and pragmatic calculation of foreign collaborative prospects will add a useful chapter to the list.

4.3 Concept of FISHNET

Creation of a centralised database on fisheries with an international, national, regional and sub-regional information centre will promote fruitful sharing of resource. This concept of 'FISHNET' shall herald the arrival of a new era in which all forms of correspondence for research and administration in fisheries shall be electronically monitored.

4.4 Integrated network of extension services

The next millennium, will definitely witness the establishment of extension as a vital role player in transforming the Indian fisheries sector from a subsistence activity to a lucrative tool of socio-economic development. An integrated network of extension services, is the keyword, for success will encompass imparting training to fishermen and fish farmers in a variety of modified farming techniques as well as vocational skills, teaching them advantages of crop rotation and integration of agricultural, livestock and fishery units thus utilising organic wastes and byproducts too. Establishment of a "capsule" communication system for imparting complete and comprehensive understanding of a technology will help to tap our human resources effectively.

4.5 Proliferation of fisheries co-operatives

Another most important development of the next millennium will be the proliferation of fisheries co-operatives, which will help translate political freedom into economic independence with the objective of self and mutual help. A strong thrust on cooperatives will help to encourage, promote and assist the prosperity of the fishermen and fish farmers. Teaching them the advantages of saving schemes and getting them properly linked with the government agencies would add a jewel in the crown. The fruits of research should be made available to them in easy understandable user friendly form.

4.6 Contribution of students

In this regard, potential R&D workers like students and research scholars should be given a chance to make use of classroom knowledge to search for practicable solutions to problems. The experimentation with disease diagnostic kits and remedial kits, their cost effectiveness and made easy operation procedures shall bear fruits only if there is sufficient and effective positive publicity. In this regard the screening of documentaries related to beneficial effects of fisheries before a movie in theatres, T.V., radio broadcasts on a regular basis and advertising value added fish products in ready to eat form, packaged attractively over the public broadcast systems shall go a long way to make people realise the worth of fisheries and erase pseudo concepts from their minds.

5. CONCLUSION

India is endowed with rich natural resources and with the right technology for development, what we need is a genuine comprehension of this natural goldmine, a single minded devotion to develop this industry, by smoothening out the rough edges. We can then witness an allround exponential growth.

India stands, therefore, on the threshold of a revolution in transforming coastal economics and contributing dramatically to its export earnings. We finally need to maintain a positive viewpoint of our prospects and strive hard to be the best in the forthcoming century.