

## Mussels-Green gold for fisherfolk?<sup>6</sup>

Mussels are gaining popularity among the coastal population, as an important and cheap source of protein food. Mussels are shell fishes and the edible meat inside the shells is the economic product. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute at Kochi has developed technologies for the culture of green mussels. 1 Kg of mussel meat fetches Rs. 200-220 in the market. The shells which are a valuable source of lime too have economic value.

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute at Kochi has developed culture methods such as pole culture and rack and ren method in back waters or estuaries. The rack and ren method is the most commonly used. The mussel seeds are collected from rocks during July-September. The seeds are spread on cotton mosquito netting which are wrapped on the poles or wrapped on the ropes which are suspended from racks. The pole method and rack method is done in estuaries at 2.5 m depth. After 2-3 days, the cotton mosquito netting gets torn off and the mussel seeds stick to the poles or ropes. The seeding rate is 0.75 to 1.0 kg/m of rope. At the end of 6 months, the mussels grow to 90-100 mm in length and are ready for harvest. Harvest is done manually. The yield is 150t/ha.



Mussel culture is a very simple and easy method which requires no after care once the seeding of mussel ropes is done. Feeding of mussels need not be done as it absorbs nutrients from the water. The mussel meat is sold in the local markets for Rs. 200-220 /kg of meat and in International market for Rs. 400-500 /kg. Export houses in Udupi, Thrasi in Kundapur, buy the mussels directly from the farms.

Mussel culture has proved to be a valuable source of income for fisher folk during the lean fishing season and the mechanized ban season, when fisher folk have hardly any income. The culture method can be easily undertaken by fisherwomen groups since the culture is done in shallow waters. I appeal to my fishermen friends to visit the demonstrations sites of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute and contact the scientists of the Institute for getting more information.

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