

'Collective efforts of Afro-Asian countries needed to address challenges in fisheries and aquaculture'

Kochi, Dec 11 (IANS) International collaboration and collective efforts of Afro-Asian countries are required to address the challenges in fisheries and aquaculture, African-Asian Rural Development Organisation's (AARDO) Assistant Secretary General Rami Mahmoud Abdel Halim Qtaishat said on Monday. "The need of the hour is the critical need for balancing the exploitation and utilisation of marine resources for the health of the ocean and the sustainability of the food production system. In the wake of a range of challenges including climate change, the transboundary nature of marine fisheries and issues of aquaculture demand a joint international effort to ensure sustainable practices across the globe," Qtaishat said while inaugurating a 10-day international workshop-cum-training programme at the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

He added that the AARDO is committed to fostering partnerships among its member countries to address the shared challenges in the sector, as he noted that fish remains a highly traded global food commodity and half of its export value originates from developing countries. "Fish and seafood are playing a vital role in providing nutritional security and fuelling livelihood, said Qtaishat. Officials and researchers from eight AARDO member countries, namely Oman, Egypt, Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, Zambia, Malaysia, and Bangladesh are attending the workshop, which is part of the international collaboration between India's Ministry of Rural Development and the AARDO, New Delhi.

AARDO's Head of Research Division and Programme Coordinator, Dr Khushnood Ali, said many African-Asian countries are striving hard to transform their food production sectors amid a series of daunting challenges such as poverty, hunger, food and nutritional insecurity, climate change, and environmental degradation."The technological divide is one of the major issues being faced by these nations and this could be resolved to a great extent by fostering cooperation among countries enabling the transfer of technologies. Establishing a resilient and sustainable food system is necessary for eradicating hunger, addressing rural poverty and for an inclusive growth," he said.

CMFRI Director Dr A Gopalakrishnan said collaborative efforts between governments, scientists and other stakeholders are the need of the hour to implement sustainable practices in fisheries and aquaculture, and protect the aquatic biodiversity. The AARDO was formed in 1962 with its headquarters at New Delhi and is an inter-governmental organisation comprising 32 full member countries (18 from Africa and 14 from Asia) besides 2 associate members (Korea Rural Community Corporation of South Korea and the Agricultural Bank of Sudan).