

Centre to launch pilot project to revive diversified fish farming in Kuttanad, Kerala



KOCHI: In a major move to uplift the fishing community in the Kuttanad region in Kerala, Union Minister of State, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, and Minority Affairs, Shri George Kurian, has announced a new pilot project aimed at boosting livelihood opportunities for fish farmers. This was decided at a consultative meeting held at ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in Kochi.

Under the new initiative, the Department of Fisheries, Government of India, will take proactive steps to implement a range of modern and traditional aquaculture practices to revive economy based in Kuttanad. These include integrated fish farming, cage fish farming, the sustainable "one fish one paddy" initiative, and biofloc fish farming.

As part of the project, Fish Farmers Producers Organizations (FFPOs) will be formed to empower local communities and streamline operations. "Enhancing livelihood for the region's farmers is the primary goal of the initiative", Minister George Kurian said.

Under the pilot project, extensive training programmes will be conducted to equip farmers with the necessary skills in aquaculture and other related practices. The project will also encourage startups to enter the sector, focusing on essential post-harvest activities such as processing, cleaning, packing, and fish trade, thereby creating new employment opportunities and adding value to the produce.

Given the diverse aquatic environments of Kuttanad, the project will be divided into separate fresh and brackish water farming initiatives, catering specifically to the distinct conditions of Upper and Lower Kuttanad. Expertise of premier research institutions, including ICAR research institutes, central agencies, and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) will be explored to provide technical and scientific support.

The Union Minister of State pointed out that a detailed project report will be prepared immediately to ensure the swift and effective implementation of the initiative, which is expected to bring significant and sustainable economic benefits to the Kuttanad region. Former Union Minister of State Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Fisheries Development Commissioner Dr Mohammed Koya, CMFRI Director Dr Grinson George, and CMFRI Principal Scientist Dr Imelda Joseph also spoke while representatives from various research institutes, government agencies and KVKs presented their views on the occasion.