

India needs to increase mariculture production to meet country's growing seafood demand CMFRI

Kochi, Oct 11 (PTI) To meet the country's rapidly growing seafood demand, mariculture production in India needs to increase to 25 lakh tonnes by 2047 from the current 1.5 lakh tonnes, CMFRI Director Grinson George said on Saturday. Mariculture is the next big thing in India's marine fisheries sector, he added. Various technologies such as cage culture and Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) could be utilised to increase marine fish production, he said in a statement issued by Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

He was speaking after inaugurating a training programme for fish farmers at CMFRI, marking the nationwide launch of the central government's Pradhan Mantri Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY), the release said.

He further said that India currently produces an average 35 lakh tonnes from marine capture fisheries annually. "Due to climate change and resource depletion, the country needs to explore alternative systems such as mariculture to increase marine fish production. To meet the growing seafood demand, at least 25 lakh tonnes of mariculture production is targeted by 2047," George is quoted as saying in the release.

He further said that CMFRI has developed several mariculture technologies suited to Indian conditions, which can substantially enhance productivity and fishermen livelihood opportunities. Besides that, India has immense potential in seaweed farming, another major component in mariculture, he stated. "While the global seaweed production stands at 3.55 crore tonnes, India's production remains very low. At least 50 lakh tonnes of domestic seaweed production could be achieved by the country to meet the growing industrial and nutraceutical demand", he added.

Referring to India's vast coastline and favourable marine conditions, the CMFRI Director contended that the country has the natural potential and scientific capability to emerge as a global mariculture hub, the release said. "If we adopt modern technologies and develop a strong policy framework, mariculture can transform the economic landscape of coastal India," he said, according to the release. He also pointed out that a national mariculture policy and supportive legal framework were required to promote sustainable, large-scale investment and systematic growth in this sector, it said.