

# From coast to enterprise, women entrepreneurs steering change in fisheries

Kochi: This International Women's Day, the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) is set to honour two such inspiring women, Sheeja Cylvi and K. S. Ramadevi Pramod, whose grit and enterprise have transformed modest beginnings into sustainable fisheries ventures. The recognition will be part of the institute's International Women's Day celebrations in Kochi on Monday, where industrialist and philanthropist Sheela Kochouseph Chittalappilly will attend as chief guest.

Both entrepreneurs are beneficiaries of CMFRI's Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Hub project, an initiative aimed at strengthening livelihood opportunities in coastal communities by providing training, technical support and entrepreneurial guidance. For Sheeja Cylvi, a resident of St Sebastian Island in Ashtamudi Lake in Kollam district, aquaculture has become a lifeline. Over the past decade, she has built a thriving venture centred on mussel and oyster farming. What began as a small initiative gradually grew into a reliable source of income after she attended training programmes organised by CMFRI.

Today, a single crop raised from ten sacks of mussel seeds can yield nearly Rs 1 lakh at harvest. Beyond supporting her own household and her children's education, Sheeja has also helped introduce mussel farming to women-led self-help groups in the area, enabling several others in the community to earn a livelihood.

A similar journey of perseverance marks the story of Ramadevi Pramod from Nayarambalam in Ernakulam district. What started as a hobby nearly a decade ago has evolved into a commercial ornamental fish farming enterprise. After becoming a beneficiary of the STI Hub project in 2022, Ramadevi expanded her operations into a full-scale unit. She now supplies ornamental fish to the state-run Kerala Aqua Ventures International Limited (KAVIL) while also selling directly from her farm, earning around Rs 5,000 a week from the trade.

By recognising these journeys, CMFRI hopes to spotlight the growing role of women entrepreneurs in fisheries and inspire more coastal women to explore opportunities in marine and inland aquaculture, proving that resilience and knowledge can turn even small ventures into powerful engines of change.