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CMFRI initiative helps coastal women to become successful fisheries entrepreneurs



A science-led initiative of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) is gaining traction among coastal women, helping them build livelihoods as entrepreneurs in fish farming, ornamental aquaculture and seafood value addition. The institute's Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Hub has facilitated 84 micro-enterprise initiatives across eight districts of Kerala between 2022 and 2026, with the aim of improving livelihoods and creating opportunities for income diversification.

Vipinkumar V.P., Principal Scientist, said the project has directly benefitted 469 people, including 220 women and six transgender persons, with indirect benefits expected to reach around 2,500 others. The impact assessment of the project reveals that household incomes of beneficiaries have increased by 30–35 per cent. The STI Hub extended 141 training programmes that strengthened their technical and entrepreneurial skills. The enterprises span cage culture, pearl spot seed production, ornamental fish culture, integrated fish farming, mussel and oyster farming, clam units, value-added fish production units, fish vending and dry fish production units. The initiative helped women move beyond traditional livelihood roles to become producers, skilled service providers and business owners in the fisheries value chain, he said. A good number of beneficiaries established themselves as skilled professionals in diverse fisheries-based livelihood activities, including cage fabrication, aquarium technology, integrated farming, seed and broodstock distribution.

CMFRI extended support in technology transfer, hands-on training, entrepreneurial guidance and market linkages facilitated through the institute's Agricultural Technology Information Centre and Krishi Vigyan Kendra. "The STI Hub demonstrates how scientific interventions can translate into tangible economic opportunities. The initiative offers a replicable model for empowering women and promoting inclusive growth in the fisheries sector," said Grinson George, Director, CMFRI. Through this initiative, CMFRI aimed to improve the socio-economic conditions of coastal communities facing subsistence-level incomes and limited livelihood opportunities. By addressing gaps in access to finance, technical knowledge and essential infrastructure, the project promoted sustainable livelihood diversification and fisheries-based entrepreneurship, he said. CMFRI will celebrate Women Farmers' Day on Thursday at the farm of Akhilamol in Kodungallur, a national award-winning entrepreneur and beneficiary of the STI Hub project. The event will spotlight the achievements of women entrepreneurs, with beneficiaries sharing their success stories and experiences in fisheries-based enterprises.