

Standing Committee Report Summary

Employment Generation and Revenue Earning Potential of Fisheries Sector

- The Standing Committee on Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (Chair: Mr. P.C. Gaddigoudar) presented its report on 'Employment Generation and Revenue Earning Potential of Fisheries Sector' on February 7, 2024. Key findings and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Employment generation in fisheries:** Jobs in the fisheries sector range from production and sale of inputs, fishing, fish-farming, processing, to marketing and distribution. These may be informal small scale or highly organised and industrial operations. The Department of Fisheries seeks to generate 55 lakh jobs by 2024-25 under PM Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). The Committee recommended that to generate employment opportunities, investments in areas such as exports, post-harvest processing, and import substitution should be increased.
 - **Fisheries industry:** Fisheries contribute 6.7% to gross value added of the agriculture sector and employs about 28 million people directly. The Committee noted the growth potential of the sector, and its possible contributions to government revenue. The sector grew by 9% during 2015-16 and 2020-21 (at constant prices). Fish is a cheap source of protein, and has potential to contribute to food security as well. Under PMMSY, the central government has set a production target of 22 million metric tonnes of fish by 2025. Currently, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) carries out national fishery research. The Committee suggested that given the importance of the sector, a separate research council should be constituted.
 - **Conservation measures:** The fisheries sector is at risk of being unsustainable due to overfishing, pollution, disease outbreak, destruction of habitat and climate change. The Committee recommended that breeding and propagation of important fish species must be ensured. Suitable hatchery infrastructure may be developed for it. Many fish species such as the Indian oil sardine are declining. Losses in juvenile fish occur mainly when they are incidentally caught in large trawls. Practices such as bull trawling and use LED lights for fishing undertaken by fish meal fish oil industry are responsible for such losses, and have been banned. The Committee recommended devising a mechanism to stop use of banned fishing practices.
- **Infrastructure development to augment breeding:** The Committee noted that while some fish are at risk of overfishing, some fish witness low commercial breeding. These fish species include Magur, Singhi, Pabda, and Koi. It noted that this may be due to lack of adequate hatchery infrastructure, and recommended establishing such infrastructure. Cage culture is an aquaculture production system where fish are held in floating net pens. India has about 5,700 large dams and many small and medium reservoirs. The Committee suggested that these should be harnessed to enhance fish production.
- **International trade:** L vannamei shrimp variety constitutes about 90-95% of India's seafood exports. However, the mother stock of the shrimp variety is imported. The Committee recommended that the mother stock be urgently produced in the country. It also suggested reducing single species dependency, and diversifying to other species such as P. Modonon and P. Indicus. It recommended fast tracking existing gene improvement and nucleus breeding projects for these species. This is expected to improve India's export competitiveness. The Committee also highlighted that interventions are required in disease management and traceability of fish produce, to improve export competitiveness of the sector.
- **Performance of infrastructure development fund:** The Committee observed that the private sector is not taking up on the Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund, as it only provides interest subvention. Currently it provides a 3% interest subvention for loans whose interest rates are greater than 5%. The Committee suggested that the Department should ease the process of sanctioning approvals. The Committee also recommended exploring the possibility of providing nil interest rate on credit provided through Kisan Credit Cards. The current interest rate is 7%, on which the central government provides a 3% subvention.

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