

Standing Committee Report Summary

Development of Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture

- The Standing Committee on Agriculture (Chair: Mr. Hukmdev Narayan Yadav) submitted a report on ‘Scheme on Development of Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture – An Analysis’ on July 25, 2018. The scheme focuses on increasing fish productivity, species diversification, and expansion of aquaculture area. The key recommendations of the Standing Committee include:
 - **Diversification:** The Committee observed that the scheme, since its inception in 1973-74, has seen under-achievement of targets due to improper implementation, which has restricted the growth of inland fisheries. It also observed that the share of freshwater aquaculture in inland fisheries has increased from 34% in mid-1980s to 80% in recent years. Therefore, the Committee recommended diversification of fish production in other areas like integrated fish farming, cold water fisheries, riverine fisheries, capture fisheries, and brackish water fisheries, among others. It also recommended that quality inputs in terms of seed, feed, and health management, should be provided, with emphasis on timely implementation for enhancing productivity.
 - **Funding:** The Committee observed that only Rs 400 crore was allocated out of the approved central outlay of Rs 598 crore in 2017-18. Given that only a portion of this would be allocated to inland fisheries and aquaculture, it noted that this allocation is insufficient and should be increased. It also observed that utilisation certificates (UCs) amounting to Rs 290 crore were pending as on March 31, 2017. It noted that under-utilisation of funds leads to the vicious cycle of lower allocation and downsized targets. It recommended corrective measures for liquidation of outstanding UCs in a time bound manner.
 - **Scientific and Sustainable Methods:** The Committee noted that Recirculatory Aquaculture System (RAS) is a scientific and sustainable method of fish farming which can be used to exponentially increase production. RAS is a production system that continuously filters and recycles water, enabling large-scale fish farming that requires a small amount of water without causing pollution. The Committee recommended that fish farmers should be encouraged to take up RAS practices, aided with easy availability of required funds and infrastructure.
 - **Training:** The Committee stressed on the need for inclusiveness in skill development programmes, with emphasis on the north-eastern and hilly states. It recommended special attention towards inclusion of fishermen from these areas in such programmes, so as to bring them at par with other fishermen. It also recommended special training for some fishermen, who can act as master trainers. They, in turn, would train other fishermen in better reception and retention of the skills and techniques provided during training.
 - **Assessment:** The Committee observed that no evaluation has been done to assess the actual number of ponds, wetlands, water logged areas, and other water bodies in the country, where fish cultivation is possible. It recommended that an evaluation should be undertaken to assess the actual number of water bodies with fishing potential within each state. It recommended that action plans should be prepared for each state, so that water bodies can be utilised optimally and their potential can be explored fully.
 - **Availability of resources:** The Committee stressed that fisheries should be treated at par with agriculture so that fish farmers get easier access to institutional credit and insurance. It recommended states to make policies regarding leasing out of water bodies by the Panchayats and to ensure deserving prices to fishers.
 - **Cooperatives:** The Committee noted that there is no proper mechanism in place to ensure that fish cooperatives function in an optimal way and to hold them accountable. It recommended the states to come up with a mechanism to measure the performance of the cooperatives and to ensure their accountability. It also recommended the states to formulate proper guidelines for leasing out the state resources to the cooperatives and guidelines for their maintenance.

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