

Cage farming of fish gaining popularity in Kerala

Kochi, Apr 2 (IANS): The cage fish farming model is being widely popularised in Kerala largely due to the efforts of Kochi-headquartered Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). The CMFRI has begun providing technical training to those interested in cage farming to equip them launch the farming by giving guidance in areas such as cage fabrication and installation, site identification, seed selection, feed management and trading.

Soon after the training, the participants launched the farming of commercially important fish varieties such as pearl spot, sea bass, red snapper, tilapia and giant trevally in the brackish and fresh water bodies in their respective regions.

Besides Ernakulam, where the maximum number of cage farming enterprises are in operation, the initiative has been started in six districts -- Kannur, Malappuram, Thrissur, Alappuzha, Kottayam and Kollam.

Imelda Joseph, head of Mariculture Division, said there are around 100 farming units in place in Pizhala Island, where most of the farmers are women. "Two years ago, the farmers in Kerala were not much interested in investing money in cage culture but now the situation has considerably changed," said Joseph. "More people from across the state are approaching CMFRI expressing their willingness to launch cage farming enterprises. This is a positive sign that Kerala is moving towards for a fish revolution, utilising its highly prospective water resources," the official added.

Sea cage farming has turned to a huge hit in other coastal states, especially in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka under CMFRI's All India Network Project on Mariculture (AINEPM). According to CMFRI's technology, cages made of GI pipes are suitable for farming in Kerala waters.

It could be done with an investment of Rs 60,000 and upwards and returns will begin after six months, according to officials.