Draft Mariculture policy

Why in news?

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The centre recently released a draft policy on mariculture.

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What is mariculture?

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- Mariculture is a specialised branch of aquaculture involving the cultivation of economically important marine plants and animals in the sea or any other water body having tidal influence.
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- It involves three phases using the following types of facilities in land or in the sea and distinct skill sets –
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1. **Hatchery** - Involves land-based facilities to rear broodstock and produce seeds.
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2. **Nursery** - Involves rearing of juveniles to a size conducive to stocking in the grow-out systems which are land based or inshore.
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3. **Grow-out**- Includes culture of marine plants and animals in the sea, water bodies withtidal influence and land based re-circulating systems using seawater.
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What are the provisions of the draft policy?

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- **Aim** - It aims to enhance mariculture production, increase income and

employment opportunities in a sustainable way and to promote entrepreneurship by facilitating technical and financial inputs.
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- **Focus** - The policy has mooted mariculture zones by demarcating special areas in the sea for activities such as cage farming, bivalve farming, pen culture, seaweed culture, hatcheries and nurseries based on scientific criteria.
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- The policy has also suggested farming of genetically modified (GM) species only in closed mariculture systems after stringent risk assessment and monitoring.
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- It will not be permitted in open sea culture.
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- **Process** - Satellite remote sensing data and GIS will be used to identify potential zones for mariculture on the basis of scientific evaluation of environmental parameters suitable for various types of farming.
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- This will avoid conflict with other users and protecting the livelihoods of local fishing communities.
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- Sea areas identified in this manner will be designated as mariculture technology parks by the respective States.
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- In a bid to support fish breeding, culture, packaging and trade, the policy proposes encouraging the establishment of off-shore technology parks and coastal embankment systems.
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- Marine protected areas, ecologically sensitive areas such as coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass beds, and other coastal areas with strategic interest will not be considered for mariculture zones.
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- **Promotion** - The policy advises the government to formulate financial assistance programmes, including prioritised lending schemes, subsidised credit and investment subsidies, to promote mariculture.
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- **Role of states** - The policy has made provisions for leasing the water bodies and regulating the activities in the open sea waters to ensure security of the mariculture enterprises.
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- All mariculture farms in the sea would operate only in an area leased out for the purpose by the respective maritime states.
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- In addition, the state would register and license all farms for a specific

period ensuring all protection to the farm assets.
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- In the case of natural water bodies, the leases would be given by respective local self-governments.
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- **Market support** - Efficient market logistics would be promoted to minimize post-harvest losses and preserving the nutritional quality and value of fish.
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- Institutional support will be extended for development of domestic market infrastructure for hygienic handling, processing and cold storage.
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Source: Business Line

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