

Fisheries and Aquaculture in India - Role and Commitments of FAO

Mains: GS III - Economics of Animal-Rearing

Why in News?

Recently, On World Fisheries Day 2025 (November 21), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) calls for a renewed commitment to India's Blue Revolution and supports the Government of India's theme this year, which is "India's Blue Transformation: Strengthening Value Addition in Seafood Exports".

What is the status of India's fisheries and aquaculture?

- **Rapidly growing** - Fisheries and aquaculture are among India's fastest-growing food-producing sectors, playing a vital role in livelihoods, nutrition, and trade.
- **Technological and institutional support** - Over the decades, India has witnessed remarkable growth in aquatic food production that is driven by technological innovation, institutional support and proactive policy measures.
- **Critical challenges** - Overfishing, habitat degradation, water pollution and climate change are straining aquatic ecosystems.
 - Small-scale fishers and farmers often lack access to finance, technology and markets, while poor traceability.
 - Inadequate post-harvest measures limit tapping of the best export and domestic market potential and compromise food security.
- **World production** - According to the FAO State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) 2024, global capture fisheries produced 92.3 million tonnes in 2022, while aquaculture reached a record 130.9 million tonnes, valued at \$313 billion.
- **India's contribution** - India contributed 10.23 million tonnes of aquatic animals, making it the world's second-largest aquaculture producer.
- India's aquatic food production, encompassing capture fisheries and aquaculture, has risen from 2.44 million tonnes in the 1980s to 17.54 million tonnes in 2022-23.
- **Rise of aquaculture** - It has emerged as one of the key driver of this growth, reflecting sectoral modernisation through advanced technologies, infrastructure and institutional support.
- **Major institutions** - Agencies such as
 - The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) fisheries institutes,
 - Marine Products Export Development Authority,
 - National Fisheries Development Board, have promoted innovation and best practices.

- The Coastal Aquaculture Authority has regulated coastal aquaculture activities to ensure environmental compliance.
- **Role of private sector** - The private sector has expanded investments from hatcheries to exports, reinforcing value chain efficiency.
- **Programmes and schemes** - The past decade has ushered in a new phase of transformation, beginning with India's Blue Revolution initiative and advancing under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).
- These programmes have driven production growth, particularly in inland and brackish water aquaculture, while improving safety, regulation, and resilience in fisheries.
- **Key reforms** - This include vessel transponders for fisher safety, digital and credit inclusion through the Kisan Credit Card.
- The establishment of Matsya Seva Kendras for integrated support.
- The Climate-Resilient Coastal Fishermen Villages Programme and the draft National Fisheries Policy 2020 are positive developments.

What are the supports of FAO towards aquaculture and fisheries across India?

- **Strong partner** - The FAO has been a long-standing partner in India's fisheries and aquaculture journey, supporting the country's transition toward sustainability and resilience.
- The FAO's decades of collaboration with India have shaped policy, strengthened institutions, and advanced innovation in the sector.
- **BOBP** - The FAO's collaboration with India began with the Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP), one of FAO's earliest regional small-scale fisheries initiatives.
- The FAO, through BOBP, has supported the Government of India in improving small-scale fishing technologies, strengthening sea safety, and enhancing post-harvest management.
- **BOBLME** - The FAO's Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) project strengthened India's efforts to balance fisheries and conservation.
- It supports the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM), and National Plans of Action to combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, a major threat to marine ecosystems and sustainable fisheries, conserve endangered species and sustain small-scale fisheries.
- **Support to GEF** - To support India's rapid strides in the field of aquaculture, the FAO is supporting a Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded project in Andhra Pradesh on 'Transforming Aquaculture to a Sustainable, Reduced Footprint and Climate-Resilient Food System'.
- The programme is guided by Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) and Ecosystem Approach to Aquaculture (EAA) principles.
- The project aims to support the Department of Fisheries, Government of Andhra Pradesh, in promoting climate-resilient, sustainable aquaculture.
- It benefits the State and serving as a model for India to take forward the government's Blue Revolution.
- As part of the aquatic value chain, strengthening of fishing ports and fishing harbours is also one of the main thrust areas of the Government of India.
- **Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP)** - This initiative of the FAO intends to assist the Government of India to strengthen the technical capacities of fishing ports.

- It aims to address main environmental, social and economic challenges that affect the aquatic value chain.
- Two pilot fishing ports, specifically:
 - Vanakbara (Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Diu without legislation) and
 - Jakhau in Gujarat, will benefit from this TCP that will provide them with specific strategic and operational tools to identify and formulate investments projects, whose implementation would address main challenges.

What lies ahead?

- India's fisheries and aquaculture sectors are on a promising trajectory. Yet, sustainability must remain central.
- Managing fishing efforts through science-based stock assessments, promoting co-managed Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) to curb IUU fishing, following Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture and embedding ecosystem-based approaches are key priorities.
- Strengthening certification, traceability, and digital tools — while ensuring inclusivity for smallholders — will enhance competitiveness in domestic and global markets.
- The FAO remains committed to supporting India's journey toward sustainable aquatic food systems, ensuring food and nutritional security, and reducing environmental and climate footprints, guiding India's Blue Revolution toward a resilient and inclusive future.

Reference

[The Hindu| India's fisheries and FAO](#)