Working towards a new Blue Revolution

What is the issue?

- India has the potential to become the world's largest seafood producer.
- This could be achieved by rethinking the existing Blue revolution.

What are some government's initiatives?

- The Government has constituted an independent Ministry for Fisheries.
- The Budget 2019 has reiterated the Centre's commitment to usher in a new Blue Revolution by strengthening the fisheries sector.

What is India's position?

- India currently **ranks second in the world in aquaculture production** at 4.7 million tonnes per annum, while China is way ahead at 60 million tonnes p.a.
- India's aquaculture sector has the potential to upstage China.
- In the process, it could create greater **employment** opportunities, increase the volume of **exports**, strengthen the **rural economy** and contribute substantially to the country's GDP.

What could be the strategy for its 2030 Master Plan?

- The key strategy should lay special thrust on,
    1. Increasing productivity in inland fisheries and
    2. Full utilisation of India's deep-sea fishing potential.
- China has a coastal line that is twice of India and has larger areas of inland water resources and reservoirs.
- But India has one of the **largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** areas of over 2 million sq.km. compared to China's 0.88 million sq.km.
- So, the development of EEZ calls for new systems and large-scale deployment of offshore aquaculture activities of high value species.
- **Ocean ranching** is one area which will yield rich social dividends, without damaging the ecosystem.
- India **needs a single uniform national data** on marine fisheries because it will help in efficient planning for the future.

How to leverage tech for blue revolution?

- A few **dedicated satellites** for the management of fisheries could be used.
- India should bring in **5G technology** to its offshore aquaculture activities to increase output and promote tourism.
- **Stringent laws ensuring habitat protection** should be part of the plan.
- There is a need for dynamic **policy shift in inland fisheries field**.
- For better utilisation of our resources (coastal, brackish and inland), we need to create **brood-stock banks** for the diversification of cultivable species.
- **Innovative aquaculture practices** (Biosecurity, aqua-mimicry, etc) can be put into use to achieve higher yields at reduced cost.
- **Farm upgradation and automation** can be done using AI/IOT, instrumentation, sensors and other cyber-physical systems of production.
- India should look at the **cultivation of macro and microalgae** since it requires limited space, grows faster than the terrestrial plants and also results in a comparatively higher yield.
- While marketing the product, we need to concentrate on factors like **processing and value addition**.

What is the role of logistics?

- A robust logistics support requires complementary infrastructural facilities (cold chain and storage facilities) to handle peak harvests.
- **Marketing infrastructure** and cloud-based **market intelligence** should also be put in place.
- India should also concentrate on providing a **quality certification** based on globally accepted good management practices.
- The twin elements of **sustainability and traceability** both for the marine and inland sectors, should be ensured.

What should India do before unveiling its 2030 Master Plan?

- India should **sync the thought processes of various stakeholders** including the Central ministries and State governments, under the close monitoring of the Prime Minister's Office.
- Efforts should be made to **integrate aquaculture and agriculture** to boost farmers' income.
- All the above-mentioned aims need **long-term investments -** in research and development and technology upgradation.

Source: Business Line



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