

AIR Spotlight: Fisheries Sector & Blue Revolution

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation.

This article is about the discussion on “**Transforming the Fisheries Sector & Economic Revolution Through Blue Revolution**”.

Participants:

1. Dr. J Balaji, Joint Secretary, Department of Fisheries
2. V Ravikumar, AIR Correspondent

Context: World Fisheries Day is annually celebrated on 21st November.

Introduction:

- The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India and National Fisheries Development Board celebrate ‘World Fisheries Day’ on 21st November 2022.
- This day is dedicated to highlighting the critical importance of healthy ocean ecosystems and ensuring sustainable stocks of fisheries in aquaculture and ushering in an economic revolution through the [‘Blue Revolution’](#).

Blue Revolution:

- The Blue Revolution, with its multi-dimensional activities, focuses mainly on increasing fisheries production and productivity from aquaculture and fisheries resources, both inland and marine.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries has accordingly restructured the scheme by merging all the ongoing schemes under an umbrella of Blue Revolution.
- The restructured scheme provides focused development and management of fisheries, covering inland fisheries, aquaculture, marine fisheries including deep sea fishing, mariculture and all activities undertaken by the [National Fisheries Development Board \(NFDB\)](#).
- The investment of Rs 3,000 crore in the Blue Revolution is being supplemented through the Rs7,523-crore Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund. This will meet the capital investment requirement of this sector.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana:

- Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana is a scheme to bring about the Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of the fisheries sector in India.
- It was launched in September 2020. It has been approved at a total estimated investment of Rs. 20,050 crores to be implemented over a period of 5 years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25.
- The scheme intends to address critical gaps in fish production and productivity, quality, technology, post-harvest infrastructure and management, modernisation and strengthening of value chain, traceability, establishing a robust fisheries management framework and fishers' welfare.

Seaweed cultivation in India:

- Seaweed is the common name for countless species of marine plants & algae that grow in the ocean as well as in rivers, lakes, & other water bodies.
 - They are macrophytic which means they live in water or moist land surfaces.
- Seaweed farming in its simplest form, consists of the management of naturally found batches. In its most advanced form, it consists of fully controlling the life cycle of the algae.
- Seaweed is full of vitamins, minerals, & fibre. They are known to process significant medicinal effects.
- They are effective binding agents (emulsifiers) & are used in commercial goods like toothpaste & fruit jelly, & as popular softeners (emollients) in organic cosmetics & skin-care products.

Potential in India:

- Seaweeds are abundant along the Tamil Nadu and Gujarat coasts and around Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Rich seaweed beds occur around Mumbai, Ratnagiri, Goa, Karwar, Varkala, Vizhinjam and Pulicat in Tamil Nadu, in Andhra Pradesh and Chilka in Odisha.
- About 844 seaweed species are reported from India.
 - The Gulf of Mannar is home to more than 240 seaweed varieties out of which at least 185 are edible ones.
- Seaweed cultivation is a highly remunerative activity involving simple, low-cost, low-maintenance technology with a short grow-out cycle.
 - It is cultivated nine months a year, and harvested every 45 days.
 - Seaweed cultivation done in 10 million hectares or 5% of the [Exclusive Economic Zone \(EEZ\)](#) area of India can provide employment to 50 million people.

- Industries related to seaweed processing also have a huge potential for those specialising in microbiology, chemistry and food technology.
- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying is working to set up a seaweed park in Tamil Nadu to improve the livelihood of fishermen.
- Tamil Nadu has been requested to set aside space for a [Special Economic Zone](#) for seaweed farming.



Image Source: Ecowatch

Other initiatives towards encouraging fisheries in India:

- From 2.5 tonnes per hectare, the productivity of freshwater fish farms has increased to almost 3 metric tonnes per hectare.
- From the previous two to four tonnes per hectare, brackish water coastal aquaculture productivity has reached 10 to 12 metric tonnes per hectare.
- Around 30,000 hectares have been added to the area under fish farming.
- The new National Policy on Marine Fisheries talks of introducing deep-sea fishing vessels and assisting fishing communities to convert their vessels and gears for the waters beyond.
- We must prioritise seed production in order to attain self-sufficiency in the sector.
- Encouraging private sector participation, PMMSY has earmarked a separate fund of ₹100 crore under the entrepreneur models and urges young entrepreneurs to offer solutions through technology interventions.
- To facilitate access to institutional credit and meet working capital requirements, the GoI has extended Kisan Credit Card (KCC) facilities to fish farmers from FY 2018-19.

- NFDB, the nodal agency for PMMSY, has been organising fish festivals, culinary seminars, and exposure visits.
- Along with these interventions, the GoI has been making efforts to develop Indian fisheries towards becoming a global leader in the sustainable fisheries and aquaculture sector.