

Opportunities for the Growth of Fisheries Sector in India

Suvetha Venkatachalapathi

Ph.D., Scholar, ICAR – Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Mumbai (M.S.)

SUMMARY

Fisheries play a vital role in ensuring food security for the growing population of India. Fish is a significant source of animal protein, and the per capita fish consumption in India has been steadily increasing. In 2021–22, the share of the sector to GDP was 1.1%, a 160% increase from its 0.4% contribution in 1950–51, while its share in agricultural GDP was 6.7% with a value of 2.3 lakh crore. The fisheries sector has demonstrated an outstanding 10% average annual growth rate from 2013 – 14 to 2021-22, with total fish production of 16.25 MMT in 2021-22, in which 4.1 and 12.1 MMT comes from marine and inland fisheries, respectively. Per capita fish consumption is 6.31kg in India, which is less than the WHO-recommended per capita fish consumption of 12kg. The fisheries sector is the fourth largest exporter of fish and fisheries products, accounting for 5% of total exports and 19.23% of total agricultural exports in 2017-18. Still, lots of unexplored or under-explored potential is there in developing countries like India. This chapter first discusses the opportunities and potential for growth of the fisheries sector in India.

INTRODUCTION

The fisheries sector plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development of coastal communities in India. It provides income opportunities, improves living standards, and supports the development of infrastructure and social amenities in fishing villages. Government initiatives, such as the Blue Revolution and various welfare schemes, aim to uplift the livelihoods of fishermen and enhance their socio-economic conditions. The fisheries sector in India has significant untapped potential for growth and development. With its long coastline, inland water resources, and favourable climatic conditions, India has ample opportunities to enhance fish production, promote sustainable aquaculture practices, and explore new export markets.

Challenges faced by the fisheries sector in India

The fisheries sector in India faces several challenges that affect its growth, sustainability, and the livelihoods of those dependent on it. Here are some key challenges faced by the fisheries sector in India.

Opportunities for the growth and development of the fisheries sector

Aquaculture Expansion and species diversification: Aquaculture, or fish farming, presents significant opportunities for growth. India has vast freshwater resources, brackish water areas, and a long coastline suitable for aquaculture and has huge potential for diversification. Promoting sustainable and responsible aquaculture practices can help meet the increasing demand for fish, reduce pressure on wild fish stocks, and generate employment and income opportunities.

Export potential:

India is one of the largest exporters of seafood globally. The international market demand for seafood products, including frozen fish, shrimp, and value-added fish products, presents significant opportunities for export growth. Strengthening infrastructure, improving quality control measures, and complying with international standards and certifications can enhance India's competitiveness in the global seafood market.

Value addition and processing:

The fisheries sector offers opportunities for value addition and processing. Developing processing units and promoting value-added fish products, such as ready-to-cook items, fillets, and fish oil, can increase the value of fishery products and contribute to higher income generation. Investments in processing infrastructure, technology, and skills development are crucial to tap into this opportunity.

Sustainable practices and certification:

Growing consumer awareness and demand for sustainably sourced seafood present opportunities for the adoption of sustainable fishing practices. Obtaining certification, such as from the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) or the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), can help access premium markets and cater to environmentally conscious consumers.

Technological advancements:

Technology plays a crucial role in improving productivity, efficiency, and sustainability in the fisheries sector. Opportunities exist for adopting advanced technologies, such as fish aggregating devices (FADs), remote sensing, fish tracking systems, and improved fishing gear and vessels. These technologies can enhance the efficiency of fishing operations, reduce bycatch and environmental impact, and improve overall productivity.

Skill development and capacity building:

Building the skills and capacity of fishermen and fish farmers is crucial for the growth of the sector. Training programs and capacity-building initiatives can equip them with modern fishing techniques, sustainable practices, and post-harvest handling methods. Enhanced skills and knowledge enable fishermen to improve their catch, reduce post-harvest losses, and add value to their products.

Coastal and marine tourism:

India's coastal and marine resources offer opportunities for the development of coastal and marine tourism, including recreational fishing, ecotourism, and coastal adventure sports. Investing in tourism infrastructure, promoting sustainable tourism practices, and diversifying income sources for coastal communities can contribute to the overall development of the fisheries sector.

Research and innovation:

Research and innovation play a critical role in unlocking the potential of the fisheries sector. Investments in research and development can lead to the development of improved fish breeds, disease-resistant varieties, sustainable aquaculture practices, and innovative fishing technologies. Collaboration between research institutions, industry stakeholders, and government agencies can facilitate knowledge transfer and innovation.

CONCLUSION

To leverage these opportunities, it is important for the government, industry, and other stakeholders to work together. Developing supportive policies, providing access to finance and markets, strengthening research and development, and promoting sustainable practices are essential for the sustainable growth and development of the fisheries sector in India. Investments in infrastructure, technology, and research and development can further unlock the sector's potential.

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