

SDGs and their Implementation in Fisheries

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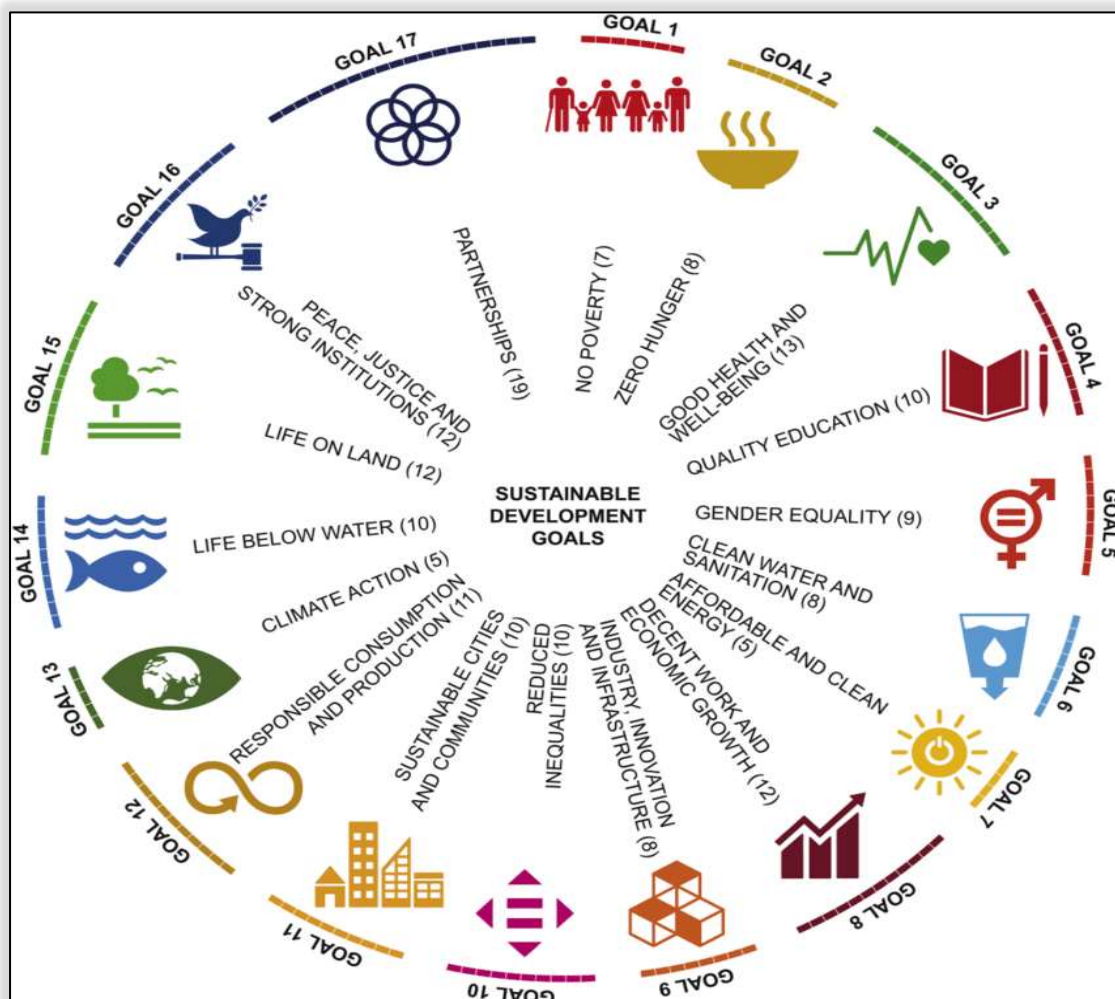
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SUMMARY

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the UN in 2015, offer a global framework aimed at addressing critical social, economic, and environmental challenges by 2030. This article explores the implementation and importance of these goals within the fisheries sector, highlighting its pivotal role in achieving multiple SDGs. The fisheries industry significantly impacts food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable economic growth, especially in rural areas. Key SDGs relevant to fisheries include SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and others that promote responsible consumption, climate action, and gender equality. The article also examines the specific challenges and strategies for achieving these goals in the Indian context, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts, innovative practices, and effective management strategies to ensure the sector's sustainability and contribution to global SDG targets.

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have a 2030 deadline, were created by the UN in 2015. These 17 global goals, which include 169 targets, provide a framework for addressing urgent problems related to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. They stand for a shared vision of the future that intends to direct businesses, governments, nonprofits, and the international community in concerted efforts to create a better world. It is expected that member states will include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



in their national policies and report on their progress on a regular basis. Many businesses have also embraced this practice. Because the fisheries and aquaculture industries have a major impact on food and nutritional security, especially in rural regions, they are essential to the success and implementation of the SDGs. There are plenty of job and revenue-generating prospects in this industry. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an international initiative to end hunger and poverty, sustainable management of fisheries resources is crucial.

SDGs related to Fisheries sector

SDG-1 No Poverty

SDG-2 Zero Hunger

SDG-3 Good Health and Well-Being

SDG-5 Gender Equality

SDG-6 Clean Water

SDG-8 Decent Work and Economic Growth

SDG-12 Responsible Consumption and Production

SDG-13 Climate Action

SDG-14 Life Below Water

Importance of Sustainable Fisheries in relation with SDGs

Sustainable fisheries are essential for meeting several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The FAO's 2024 reports highlight that sustainable fisheries help achieve SDG 14 (Life Below Water) by ensuring healthy fish populations and marine environments. They also advance SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by enhancing food security and livelihoods in coastal areas. By reducing the environmental and climate impacts of fishing, sustainable practices contribute to SDG 13 (Climate Action) by boosting the resilience of fisheries and marine ecosystems. Furthermore, they support SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by incorporating sustainable management into aquatic food production. Additionally, sustainable fisheries advance SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by providing employment, improving food security, and promoting the long-term profitability and stability of the fishing sector.

Implementation and importance of SDGs in Fisheries

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) play a crucial role in the fisheries sector, driving progress in multiple areas. Fisheries help achieve SDGs 1, 2, 3, and 12 by providing nutritional food, enhancing food security, improving health, and creating employment and income opportunities. Fish is an affordable, nutritious source of animal protein, rich in unsaturated fatty acids and micronutrients like vitamin A, iron, calcium, and zinc, which are essential for cognitive and physical development, particularly in infants and children.

The sector is vital for poverty and hunger eradication, with millions engaged in fisheries and aquaculture. Women, who are underrepresented and underutilized in many areas, play a critical role in fisheries, contributing significantly to the workforce. Ensuring gender equality (SDG 5) in fisheries through policy support can further elevate women's contributions in various activities like fish culture, processing, and value addition. Climate change (SDG 13) poses significant challenges, impacting fish distribution, productivity, and marine ecosystems. Addressing these impacts requires research, innovative farming techniques, and effective management strategies to ensure the sector's resilience and sustainability.

Global partnerships (SDG 17) are essential for sustainable fisheries management. Collaborations between organizations like the FAO, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, and others are crucial. SDG 14 (Life below water) specifically focuses on conserving and sustainably using oceans and marine resources, highlighting the importance of fisheries in achieving sustainable development. This goal includes 10 targets aimed at reducing pollution, protecting ecosystems, and managing resources responsibly, emphasizing the sector's pivotal role in achieving broader SDG objectives.

The ten targets are as follows: to reduce marine pollution (14.1), to protect and restore ecosystems (14.2), to reduce ocean acidification (14.3), to engage in sustainable fishing (14.4), to conserve coastal and marine areas (14.5), to stop providing subsidies that encourage overfishing (14.6), to increase the economic benefits from using marine resources sustainably (14.7), to advance scientific knowledge (14.a), to assist small-scale fishermen (14.b), and to implement and enforce international sea law (14.c).

Indian Scenario – Achieving SDGs in Fisheries

Compared to other food-producing sectors in India, the fisheries sector significantly contributes to the country's economic growth and continues to expand rapidly. India ranks as the world's third-largest fish producer, accounting for about 8% of global fish production. The sector boasts an impressive average annual growth rate and provides employment to millions directly and indirectly. However, sustainable development remains a major concern, as evidenced by India's rank of 109 with a score of 63.99 in the 2023 SDG index out of 193 countries. The marine fisheries sector in India faces numerous challenges in achieving SDG targets, including overexploitation, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, pollution, bycatch discards, juvenile fishing, climate change, marine ecosystem destruction, socio-economic conflicts, and low catch per unit effort. The inland sector struggles with underutilization of resources, inadequate infrastructure, aquatic ecosystem destruction and fragmentation, pollution, impoundment and channelization of water bodies, soil erosion, hydrological modifications of rivers, lakes, and floodplains, and poor policies and management strategies. The aquaculture sector is plagued by disease outbreaks, climate change, natural disasters, and increased competition for resources and production factors. As emphasized in the 17th SDG, India must achieve SDGs in fisheries through collaborative efforts among international organizations, fisheries departments, research institutes, and other stakeholders, promoting a Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development. The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), a flagship scheme for fisheries development under the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Package, with an estimated investment of Rs. 20,050 crores for 2020-25, aims to drive this revolution. With 42% of PMMSY's total investment allocated for establishing and upgrading fisheries infrastructure, this program is poised to deliver sustainable development to the sector through comprehensive infrastructure improvements.

Action points for achieving SDG in Indian Fisheries :

- Stringent regulations and management strategies
- Tackle aquatic pollution
- Promote culture fisheries
- Explore untapped inland fisheries resources
- Infrastructure development
- Small scale fisheries development
- Culture with adopting new technologies and techniques
- Streamline fisheries data

Challenges faced in implementation of SDGs

Implementing the SDGs in the fisheries sector faces several challenges. Although there is growing awareness of new sustainability practices along the Indian coast, scaling them up remains a significant challenge. Key interventions include enforcing fishing bans during peak breeding seasons, regulating bycatch, and monitoring the use and disposal of fishing gear. Innovations developed by institutions like the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) need to be popularized, customized, and adopted more widely. Sustainability certification of fishing practices is a new area requiring substantial breakthroughs. It offers opportunities to increase international market access and improve the long-term sustainability of fishing operations. However, the high cost of certification is a major obstacle. Building domestic institutional capacity for auditing, certification, and labeling to reduce these costs is now a focus area. Given the sector's diverse needs and challenges, it is critical to identify new and additional sources of timely financing. Assessing the role and potential of private sector funding and resources raised through civil society groups is essential for advancing the sector in India.

CONCLUSION

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in fisheries is crucial for global sustainability and prosperity. Fisheries and aquaculture are vital for food security and support several SDGs. Sustainable fisheries management is essential for multiple SDGs, including poverty reduction, food security, community well-being, gender equality, clean water, economic growth, and responsible consumption. However, sustainability has become a marketing term, and regulations alone are not enough. A comprehensive approach, involving global partnerships, innovation, funding, trade, and improved data collection, is necessary. New

methods and approaches are needed to implement and monitor sustainable practices in fisheries and ecosystems effectively.

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