

Boosting India's Fishing Economy: The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

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SUMMARY

The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) is an ambitious Indian government scheme launched in 2019 to transform the country's fishing industry. It aims to modernize practices, boost production, improve infrastructure, increase exports and income, and ensure sustainability. India has vast fisheries resources but lags potential production by over 15 million tonnes annually due to outdated technologies, lack of infrastructure, and regulatory issues. Many fisher folk are lacking market access. PMMSY plans to invest over ₹20,000 crores over 5 years to double the income, boost exports to ₹1 lakh crore, and generate 55 lakh new jobs. Strategies include forming producer cooperatives, adopting modern tech, creating common infrastructure, expanding credit, upskilling, and ensuring stock sustainability. Early wins include facilitating tech adoption, constructing landing centres, replacing old equipment, and providing livelihood support during bans. PMMSY focuses on empowering communities through collective, training, credit access, and market linkages, while targeting women and marginalized groups. Sustainability efforts involve vessel regulations, GPS tracking, curbing illegal fishing, and promoting eco-friendly farming. Effective implementation with monitoring, adequate funding, and stakeholder participation is crucial. If successful, PMMSY can usher in sustainable blue growth, equitable gains, and it could transform India's fishing industry into a global model.

INTRODUCTION

India is looking to supercharge its fishing industry and the lives of fisher folk through an ambitious new scheme called the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). Announced in 2019, the program aims to modernize fishing practices, improve processing and storage, boost exports and incomes, and ensure the sustainability of fish stocks.

The Current State of Affairs

India is blessed with vast and productive marine and inland fisheries resources. However, there are major gaps in infrastructure, outdated technologies used in small-scale fisheries, and regulatory issues. Fish production lags potential by over 15 million metric tonnes annually. Many fisher folk live in poverty, lacking storage facilities and access to markets. Women make up over 50% of the workforce but have little power. These complex challenges limit incomes and keep fisherfolk trapped in debt.

Transformative Vision

PMMSY seeks to transform this sector through an investment of over ₹20,000 crores in 5 years. It aims to double fisherfolk income and fish exports to ₹1 lakh crore by 2025 while generating 55 lakh new jobs. Key goals include expanding fish production in a sustainable way, reducing post-harvest losses from 30% to 10%, cutting import dependence for selected species from 65% to 50%, and ensuring traceability from catch to consumer.

Strategies for Success

To achieve its ambitious targets, PMMSY focuses on clusters and collectivism. Activities involve forming cooperatives of small producers to achieve economies of scale, piloting modern tech like bio floc and offshore cages, creating common infrastructure like fishing harbours and cold chains, expanding credit and insurance, strengthening skills through training, and ensuring sustainability of stocks.

Early Wins

In the first three years, PMMSY has already begun transforming lives. Over ₹1,100 crores has been released so far facilitating adoption of modern tech by small producers, construction of numerous fish landing centres and harbours, replacement of old boats and nets, and alternative livelihood support to over 5 lakh families

during seasonal fishing bans. Sustained support through PMMSY will boost production and productivity manifold, establish robust seafood value chains, ensure equitable distribution of gains, and set India's fishing economy on a sustainable growth trajectory for decades to come.

Empowering Fishing Communities

A key focus area under PMMSY is empowering fisher folk by promoting collectives like Fish Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs). Over 700 FFPOs have been approved so far. These grassroot institutions will provide services like free training, facilitate access to credit, run thrift activities, and help producers to access markets directly - thus eliminating middlemen. Women constitute over 50% of workforce in fisheries. However, their contributions go unrecognized and unpaid as most work informally on family farms. PMMSY mandates that all infrastructure like fishing harbours, retail fish markets etc must have basic amenities for women. Multi-level skill training programs will be held covering 25 lakh women over 5 years. Special schemes also target tribal fishing communities and other marginalized groups with higher subsidies, social security benefits, insurance schemes, housing, community nets, and ice boxes. such initiatives will promote equity and inclusiveness.

Ushering Sustainability

Rampant mechanized trawling has led to overfishing in coastal states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala. To protect marine ecology and ensure long term gains, deep sea fishing vessels over 20m length are banned under PMMSY. Other measures include systems to track large vessels via GPS and onboard observers. Strict monitoring will curb illegal practices like bull and pair trawling which damage ecosystems. Simultaneously, deep sea tuna long liners are being promoted as a sustainable alternative that prevents bycatch of juvenile fish. Coastal livelihoods will also be secured by promoting seaweed, shellfish and pearl farming through Self Help Groups of women. Such activities regenerate coastal biodiversity, sequester carbon, and provide vital ecosystem services - all while boosting incomes.

Way Forward

PMMSY heralds a new dawn for India's fisheries sector. Using latest tech and global best practices, while drawing on traditional wisdom, PMMSY puts communities at the centre to script a sustainable blue revolution. If implemented well, these strategies will transform and in future prove this vital industry that provides nutrition and livelihoods to millions of people while maintaining the health of our water bodies.

Signs of Progress

Since its launch in 2020, PMMSY has already begun catalysing transformation across the fisheries value chain. By stimulating rapid adoption of cutting-edge technologies, the scheme has enabled enhancement of production and productivity. Over 8,000 recirculatory aquaculture systems and bio floc units have received central support to boost culture fisheries output. Cage farming in reservoirs is also being promoted in a major way. In the domain of infrastructure upgrade, over 500 fishing harbours and fish landing centres are being modernized. Equally important are post-harvest interventions like approving over 170 cold chain facilities and nearly 600 fish feed mills across various states. Looking at sustainability and conservation efforts, insurance coverage and distress relief schemes now secure lives and livelihoods of lakhs of small-scale fishers impacted by climate vagaries. Nearly 6 lakh families have benefited under a special PMMSY livelihood support program during seasonal fishing bans and lean periods. Other key achievements include vessels for deep sea fishing, traceability systems, aquaculture in saline land and brackish water, seaweed cultivation, ornamental fisheries, fish retail markets, vaccine development centres and so on - all amounting to an investment of ₹1,175 crores in the past three years. PMMSY's multilayered development strategy is already reflected in these early gains. With its continued emphasis on technology infusion, sustainability, welfare and community-led growth, the scheme is on track to realize its ambitious production, economic and social targets over the next few years. The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana is a game-changing scheme that can usher in tremendous social and economic progress if implemented effectively. Its vision of empowering communities, boosting production, improving value chains, and ensuring sustainability will secure the prosperity and wellbeing of both fisherfolk and consumers for generations. Rigorous monitoring, adequate budgets and timely fund disbursements by central and state agencies along with active participation by fisher cooperatives will determine the success of this mission. The expected outcomes by 2025 as highlighted in the government's own PMMSY guidelines are doubling exporter earnings to INR 100,000 crores and employment generation for over 55 lakh Indians [1]. With our country's youthful demographics and global

leadership in areas like IT, the incorporation of latest technologies like AI and big data under PMMSY also offers huge opportunities for innovation in precision fishing, traceability and safety [2].

If initiatives under this scheme can replicate the success of past efforts like Operation Flood for dairying, India's fisheries sector will serve as a model for the integrated and sustainable development of the blue economy globally.

CONCLUSION

The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) is a comprehensive and ambitious scheme that aims to transform India's fishing industry and improve the lives of fisherfolk. With its focus on technology adoption, infrastructure upgrades, community empowerment, and sustainability measures, the scheme has the potential to boost production and productivity, establish robust seafood value chains, ensure equitable distribution of gains, and set India's fishing economy on a sustainable growth trajectory for decades to come. Rigorous monitoring, adequate budgets, timely fund disbursements, and active participation by fisher cooperatives will be crucial to the success of this mission. If implemented effectively, PMMSY's vision of empowering communities, boosting production, improving value chains, and ensuring sustainability can secure the prosperity and well-being of both fisherfolk and consumers for generations. By incorporating the latest technologies like AI and big data, PMMSY offers opportunities for innovation in precision fishing, traceability, and safety. If the scheme can replicate the success of past efforts like Operation Flood for dairying, India's fisheries sector could serve as a model for the integrated and sustainable development of the blue economy globally.

REFERENCES

PMMSY Guidelines, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, GoI Fisheries and Aquaculture", Food and Agriculture Association of the United Nations <http://www.fao.org/policy-support/policy-themes/fisheries-aquaculture/en/>