

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 631
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03RD FEBRUARY, 2026

WTO Agreement

631. Shri Manickam Tagore B:

Will the Minister of **FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has not ratify the World Trade Organisation-Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (WTO-FSA) despite repeated assurances, thereby leaving millions of Indian fisherman uncertain, vulnerable to global market pressures and exposed to unfair competition from heavily subsidised foreign fishing fleet, if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (b) the manner in which the Government assess the likely impact of the WTO-FSA on India's domestic fishing industry, particularly small-scale and traditional fishermen and the concrete safeguards are being put in place to protect their livelihoods;
- (c) the reasons for Government accept an international framework where developed countries are effectively allowed to continue historic and capacity-enhancing subsidies, while developing countries like India face restrictions that limit growth and livelihood security; and
- (d) the detailed plan of the Government to ensure that the WTO Fish Fund meaningfully benefits Indian fishermen, including eligibility criteria, fund allocation mechanisms and timelines for disbursement, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING

(SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH ALIAS LALAN SINGH)

(a) to (c): The negotiations on the World Trade Organisation-Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (WTO-FSA) have been primarily on three pillars, namely, (i) Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, (ii) overfished stocks, and (iii) Overfishing and Overcapacity' (OCOF). The WTO-FSA as adopted during the 12th Ministerial Conference on 17th June 2022 *inter alia* contains disciplines limited to subsidies related to two pillars, namely, the IUU fishing and the overfished stocks. Whereas, a comprehensive Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies including the disciplines related to third pillar, i.e., 'Overfishing and Overcapacity' is still under negotiation in the WTO. The WTO negotiations on Fisheries Subsidies took place during the 13th Ministerial Conference held in February, 2024, wherein India has reiterated its long-held positions that responsible and sustainable fisheries is a practice ingrained in the ethos and practices of India's large and varied fishing community.

In that context, any comprehensive agreement on Fisheries subsidies should keep in mind the interests and welfare of the fishing community that depends on the marine resources for their livelihood and sustenance. India stressed that historically, while subsidies to the industrial fleets in fisheries sector has led to over exploitation, subsidies are also vital for developing countries and small economies to develop and diversify their fisheries sector as well as to protect the food security and livelihood security of their fishermen. This negotiation is linked to the concept of sustainability and as such, any comprehensive agreement on fisheries subsidies should be built on the principles of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR- RC). It should also incorporate the provisions of Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) appropriately, as is the case for all WTO agreements. India urged the Members to introduce a moratorium on subsidies by Distant Water Fishing Nations for fishing or fishing related activities beyond their EEZs for a period of at least 25 years.

India has not accepted any such framework or proposal with regard to WTO fisheries subsidies including subsidies related to OCOF that allows developed countries to continue historic and capacity-enhancing subsidies, while developing countries like India may face restrictions that limit growth and livelihood security. The Government of India remains committed to safeguard the interests of small-scale and traditional fishers, and has been advocating in the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations that countries with large historic subsidies and industrial fishing fleets should bear greater responsibility, in line with the principles of polluter pays and common but differentiated responsibilities.

(d) The WTO Fish Fund is intended to provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to developing and least-developed countries for the implementation of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.
