Fisheries Sector Looks Beyond Production: Fish Value Addition Enterprises and Mobile Marketing Set to Transform High-Value India's Blue Economy

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India's fisheries sector is evolving from a production-focused activity into a dynamic, technology-driven and value-oriented pillar of the national economy. It plays a vital role in strengthening food and nutritional security, generating employment, supporting rural livelihoods and contributing to export earnings.

The fisheries ecosystem has witnessed significant transformation through value addition, cold-chain development, modern processing, mobile fish marketing and start-up-led innovation. Enterprises are increasingly adopting Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, blockchain, drone technology, smart cold-chain systems and precision aquaculture to improve traceability, productivity, quality assurance and post-harvest management. Together, these interventions are reducing losses, enhancing profitability and strengthening the fisheries value chain.

Value addition is emerging as a critical lever in reshaping India's fisheries sector from a primary production activity into a diversified and market-oriented enterprise. By enabling fish and fishery products to be processed, packaged, branded and made available in ready-to-cook or ready-to-eat formats, it allows producers to secure better prices while responding to changing consumer preferences in domestic and export markets. More importantly, value addition helps reduce post-harvest losses, extend shelf life and improve quality standards across the supply chain. It also opens new avenues of employment and entrepreneurship, particularly for fishers, fish farmers, women's groups, youth, cooperatives and small enterprises engaged in processing, packaging, cold-chain logistics, marketing and retail. In doing so, value addition strengthens market linkages, enhances incomes and positions the fisheries sector to compete more effectively in the growing market for safe, convenient and high-quality seafood.

This shift towards value-addition has been supported by a series of public investments and targeted policy interventions aimed at strengthening the sector from production to markets. Since 2015, the Government of India has significantly stepped-up public investment in the fisheries sector, committing Rs. 39,272 crore through key schemes and

programmes such as the Blue Revolution Scheme, Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF), Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), Pradhan Mantri Matsya Samridhi Sah Yojana (PM-MKSSY) and Kisan Credit Card (KCC). These interventions are aimed at expanding infrastructure, strengthening production and post-harvest systems, and creating employment and livelihood opportunities for 74.66 lakh fishers and fish farmers across the country.

A parallel focus has been placed on strengthening transportation and logistics networks, with 46,500 facilities, including fish transportation systems, retail and wholesale fish markets, kiosks, feed mills, ice plants, cold storages and value-added enterprise units, added with an investment of Rs. 3,393.85 crore. In addition, five modern and smart fish markets are under development, integrating advanced IT systems, green technologies and logistics supply chains, and are expected to generate 15,900 employment opportunities.

Alongside infrastructure and logistics, the availability of quality raw material is equally critical for sustaining premium fish value chains. As India looks to expand value addition around premium fish products, ensuring a steady supply of quality raw material has become increasingly important. In this direction, the Department has taken up genetic improvement initiatives to develop fish varieties with faster growth, improved disease resistance, better resilience and higher productivity. The effort is expected to support the availability of high-value species such as trout, shrimp, catla, rohu, tilapia, pangasius, seabass and scampi for domestic consumption, processing and export-oriented markets. By strengthening the production base for such species, genetic improvement can complement value-added enterprises, improve farm-level returns and help India move up the fisheries value chain.

For these gains to reach small producers, institutional models that can aggregate production and improve access to markets are becoming increasingly important. The push towards value addition in fisheries is also being anchored in collective enterprise models that can help small fishers and fish farmers overcome constraints of scale, capital and market access. The Department has supported the formation of 2,195 Fisheries Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs) enabling producers to aggregate output, pool resources and participate more effectively in processing, branding and marketing activities. Several of these organisations have also been integrated with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), widening their access to digital markets and improving prospects for fair price realisation. Under PM-MKSSY, 5,500 fisheries cooperatives are being strengthened to function as FFPOs in collaboration with intermediary agencies such as NCDC, NAFED, SFAC and NERAMAC. By building collective bargaining power and linking producer groups with modern value chains, these institutions are expected to support a more inclusive transition towards value-added fisheries enterprises.

The emphasis on value addition is also creating a stronger platform for women's participation in post-harvest activities and fisheries-based enterprises. Women have emerged as a vital force in India's fisheries sector, particularly in post-harvest operations and small-scale enterprises, where value addition has opened new avenues for income generation and entrepreneurship. Their empowerment has been prioritised under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), under which projects worth more than Rs. 4,155 crore, with a central share of Rs. 1,572 crore have been approved over the last five years for the benefit of more than 1.28 lakh women beneficiaries. This support has

enabled women to participate in diverse such as fish drying, preparation of fish pickles and papad, smoked fish products, fish powder, and packaging and retailing. Mobile fish vending units and micro-processing enterprises are generating sustainable livelihoods for women across coastal, inland, and northeastern states, while also strengthening nutritional security by expanding access to affordable, protein-rich food.

India's fisheries sector is increasingly moving beyond production towards a value-chain-driven and technology-enabled ecosystem, supported by investments in processing, logistics, cold-chain infrastructure, digital platforms and entrepreneurship. With the convergence of PMMSY, PM-MKSSY, FIDF and KCC, the sector is better positioned to reduce post-harvest losses, expand value-added seafood exports, improve fisher incomes, promote women-led enterprises and generate rural employment. The future of Indian fisheries will depend not merely on producing more fish, but on building resilient, market-oriented value chains that connect fishers and fish farmers with consumers through innovation, mobility, processing and sustainable market development.

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