

Aquaculture and Need of Aquaculture Extension

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Commentary

Aquaculture, which accounts for half of India's fish production while employing only 16% of its brackishwater and half of its freshwater culture fishing capacity, is gaining traction as a future fishery development emphasis. This hypothesis is based on the current state of capture fisheries production, which is nearing a halt. In India, information, particularly on the enormous potential of aquaculture for fish production, is not well shared. It is necessary to raise public awareness about the fact that India's nutritional security is significantly dependent on how quickly the country develops aquaculture. Given that the world's population is predicted to reach 1.5 billion in the next 25 years, the amount of nutritious food required to eliminate malnutrition will be enormous. Given the rapid urbanisation of agricultural lands, the only trustworthy supply that will remain at our disposal is the vast untapped potential of aquatic resources, which can be wisely utilised through aquaculture. As a result, public awareness programmes will be implemented to educate the general public/consumers on the one hand, and legislators, administrators, and officials involved in the decision-making process for fisheries1 aquaculture development in India on the other. With the assistance of development agencies, the current enormous communication gap must be crossed and the reality understood, a problem that must be handled urgently. The growth of aquaculture land, variety of culture technologies and cultivable fish species, and a system of information transfer from research and development centres to farming homes are all variables that influence fish output. The primary goal of aquaculture/fisheries extension is to encourage and assist aqua farmers and fishing communities to improve their socioeconomic conditions and quality of life by increasing fish productivity and income through their farming practises.

The fundamental function of the aquaculture extension system, which is expected to accomplish five major duties:

- disseminating appropriate technology
- persuading the farming community to adopt such technologies
- gathering feedback from farmers

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- fine-tuning technology to suit the farming situation and
- acting as a link between the research and user system

Through better knowledge, increased productivity, and favourable attitudes, extension and development initiatives in the fisheries industry could improve the socio-economic situations of fish farmers, especially shrimp farmers. Though there has been a lot of technical development and transfer in aquaculture, there is still a long way to go in terms of establishing a broad network of extension systems to reach the general public. In 1980, a national seminar on fisheries extension identified extension as one of the weakest elements in fisheries development, citing the National Commission on Agriculture's findings as follows: "One of the principal reasons for the slow pace of inland fisheries development has been the lack of adequate work in fisheries extension." In order to effectively promote equitable and sustainable aquaculture development that will contribute to overall rural socio-economic life, effective extension services are essential to support existing farmers and new entrants. To learn and deploy the technologies and mobilise needed resources and technical inputs at their doorsteps, fish farming communities must be motivated quickly and on a big scale. No system has been devised to assist the two-way flow of information between departmental top officials (who are regularly exposed to research and development material) and extension and field staff at the grass-roots level. This highlights the need of having a well-organized and devoted Aquaculture Extension Service. Many labourers in India have expressed similar sentiments on numerous occasions. The importance of extension in the fisheries sector has also been emphasised by several expert panels and committees.