



Fisheries and Aquaculture are multidisciplinary subjects where scientists and technologists have to work: Vice President

Inaugurates 11th Indian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum

Posted On: 21 NOV 2017 8:04PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that . He was addressing the gathering after inaugurating the 11th Indian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum with the theme 'Fostering Innovations in Fisheries and Aquaculture', in Kochi, Kerala today. The Governor of Kerala, Shri P. Sathasivam, the Minister for Fisheries, Harbour Engineering & Cashew Industry, Kerala, Smt. J. Mercykutty Amma, the Minister for Local Self-Governments, Welfare of Minorities, Wakf and Haj, Kerala, Dr. K.T. Jaleel and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that the Society is helping our country to realize the goals of not only providing nutritional and food security, but also creating opportunities for entrepreneurship, income generation, self-employment, trade and commerce. He further said that India contributes to about 6.3 % of global fish production which is also 1.1% of the national GDP and 5.15 % of the agricultural GDP of the country. The total fish production during 2015-16 was 10.79 million metric tons (MMT) of which 7.21MMT comes from inland aquaculture and capture fisheries and 3.58 MMT from marine capture fisheries, he added.

The Vice President said that our country is the 3rd largest fish producer and 2nd largest aquaculture producer in the world. The country has not only been able to meet the demand of the fish for the domestic need, it has also been able to add substantially to the foreign exchange earnings through export of fish and fisheries products, he added.

The Vice President said that our future outlook must focus not on increasing our fishing efforts in the seas where there is already over capacity, but on judicious use of the declining fishery resources. It is necessary that much of the economic benefits from both capture fisheries and aquaculture are reaching the primary producers, i.e. the fishers and fish farmers, he added.

The Vice President said that we need to focus on areas which will improve the economic condition of farmers. A number of interventions are needed like reducing the role of middlemen, providing crop insurances, enhancing access to credit, developing cold chains and good upcountry market linkages, providing infrastructure for post-harvest storage, handling and value addition, he added.

The Vice President said that scientific gatherings such as the present should focus not only on sharing information on science and technologies. There should be a conscious effort to convey this knowledge to the common people, fish farmers and primary producers, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am extremely pleased to be here amidst this distinguished gathering. I am glad that you are going to discuss and share knowledge on how fisheries and aquaculture can result in greater economic, commercial, nutritional, environmental and societal benefits to more people. Fisheries is a topic close to my heart. A great part of my public life has been entwined with activities related to the welfare of the coastal people in my home state, Andhra Pradesh. Also, Asian Fisheries Society Indian Branch (AFSIB) is an organization not new to me. Way back in 1988, this young organization had invited me in my role as the Member of Parliament from Andhra Pradesh to inaugurate the 1st National Workshop on 'Carp Seed Production Technology' at Eluru on 2nd September, 1988, a remarkable beginning for a two year old Organisation.

Some of these events have definitely played a significant role in transforming Andhra Pradesh as the largest producer of farmed fish in India. Today, I am happy to note that the Society is helping our country to realize the goals of not only providing nutritional and food security, but also creating opportunities for entrepreneurship, income generation, self-employment, trade and commerce and a host of fish related activities for betterment of people.

Across the Asian region, fisheries and aquaculture are important economic activities. As you know, Asia is the largest fish producer in the world. In India, only after the independence in 1947 fisheries were recognized as a growth opportunity. Mechanization commenced in the 1950s which has revolutionized the harvest and post-harvest fisheries sectors. Aquaculture became an important agriculture production activity in almost all states of the country. Other than farming finfish in the farms on main land, our fish farmers are engaged now in farming of several species of shrimps, crabs, mussels, oysters and seaweeds in seawater in farms and in cages in open seas. India contributes to about 6.3 % of global fish production which is also 1.1% of the national GDP and 5.15 % of the agricultural GDP of the country.

As per the Govt. of India estimates, the total fish production during 2015-16 was 10.79 million metric tons of which 7.21MMT comes from inland aquaculture and capture fisheries and 3.58 MMT from marine capture fisheries. The vibrancy of the sector can be visualized by over 14-fold increase in fish production in just six and half decades. The dependence of over 14.5 million people on fisheries activities for their livelihood is a testimony of the importance that the sector holds today.

It is heartening to note that today our country is the 3rd largest fish producer and 2nd largest aquaculture producer in the world. The country has not only been able to meet the demand of the fish for the domestic need, it has also been able to add substantially to the foreign exchange earnings through export of fish and fisheries products.

Riding on a robust demand for its frozen shrimp and frozen fish in international markets, India exported over 1.1MMT of seafood worth an all-time high of US\$ 5.78 billion (Rs 37,871 crores) in 2016-17, as against 0.95 MMT and US\$ 4.69 billion dollars a year earlier. Fish and fish products have contributing nearly 20% of the agricultural exports.

More than 50 different types of fish and shellfish products are exported from India to 75 countries around the world.

That being said, what is our outlook for future? Most Asian countries are focusing on increasing the fish production through advanced technological interventions, as there is a general understanding that production from marine capture fisheries do not promise much future in terms of quantity. Studies have shown that catches from wild capture fisheries have actually been declining since peak global catches in the mid-1990s.

Nevertheless, our future outlook must focus not on increasing our fishing efforts in the seas where there is already over capacity, but on judicious use of the declining fishery resources. We need to focus on reducing losses and value addition and supplementing the ever-increasing need for fish through modern aquaculture technologies and diversification of the products.

On the one hand, we must focus on ensuring the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). On the other hand, we must have a more regulated and well-managed fishing environment through global marine capture fisheries policy and governance. We must also address marine conservation concerns.

It is necessary that much of the economic benefits from both capture fisheries and aquaculture are reaching the primary producers, *i.e.* the fishers and fish farmers.

We are doing exceedingly well in aquaculture, especially freshwater aquaculture sector, and achieving an unparalleled annual growth rate of 6-7% since last three decades. I urge the scientists to lay greater emphasis on the issues of diversification, water requirement and disease problems.

The Government of India has set for itself a goal of doubling farmers' income. Currently, much of the economic benefits from capture fisheries and aquaculture are not going to the farmers. We need to focus on areas which will improve the economic condition of farmers. A number of interventions are needed. We must, for example, reduce the role of middlemen, provide crop insurances, enhance access to credit, develop cold chains and good upcountry market linkages, provide infrastructure for post-harvest storage, handling and value addition.

I am aware that all essential technological support is being provided by the eight Fisheries Research Institutes under Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), several other mandated organizations like the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) and numerous NGOs such as the Asian Fisheries Society Indian Branch (AFSIB). However, much more needs to be done to spread awareness and provide services to the farmers.

Fisheries and Aquaculture are multidisciplinary subjects where scientists and technologists have to work as teams. Scientific gatherings such as the present should focus not only on sharing information on science and technologies. There should be a conscious effort to convey this knowledge to the common people, fish farmers and primary producers.

I am happy to note that there are Special Sessions on Gender Justice and Equity, Farmers'-Scientists' interactions and also an extensive exhibition of products and services available for entrepreneurs.

The future would be brighter and the fish farmers would be happier when all the technologies developed by you are made use of by them.

I hope your knowledge will enhance their economic returns and transform the lives of fishing population in Asia.

I am happy to declare the 11th Indian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum open.

Thank you. **JAI HIND.**"

KSD/BK

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