

GUIDELINES FOR THE STATES FOR FRAMING A BILL ON INLAND FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Background

Inland fisheries including aquaculture have been a vital source of food, nutrition, employment and economic gain for humanity, since ancient times. However, the sector has assumed more significance in recent years, especially in developing countries due to the large contributions to the overall fish production, nutritional security and gainful employment generation.

India is bestowed with vast and varied inland fisheries resources comprising rivers and canals (1 91 024 km), reservoirs (3.1 million ha), ponds and tanks (2.3 million ha), floodplain lakes and wetlands (0.79 million ha) and brackish-waters (1.4 million ha). Besides, substantial area amenable for coldwater fisheries exists in the medium and higher-altitudes of the Himalayan belt. Presently, the annual fish production in India has been estimated at 6.4 million tones, of which nearly 3.4 million tonnes (53%) comes from Inland sector. The contribution of fisheries sector to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country is about 1.4 percent in which the contribution of inland fisheries is nearly 50 percent.

The accelerated pace of human interventions during the last 4-5 decades has severely impacted inland fisheries resources. On the other hand, unplanned development in some forms of aquaculture has led to adverse impact on the environment. Presently, activities pertaining to inland fisheries are regulated in most of the States through an Act, which is based on the antiquated Indian Fisheries Act of 1897. Most of the Acts promulgated by the States lack the provisions necessary for sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture.

Recognizing the economic, social, nutritional, environmental and aesthetic importance of inland fisheries and aquaculture, the Government of India through **these guidelines** on Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture intends to ensure sustainable gainful employment in rural sector, improving the socio-economic condition of the target groups and increasing the export earnings.

Therefore, to draw the economic, social and nutritional benefits from inland fisheries and aquaculture in a sustainable manner, it is essential to adopt a judicious combination of implementation of implementation and effective regulatory framework, eco-friendly fishing and aquaculture practices with the larger involvement of the fisher communities and fish farmers.

Since these guidelines give directions for sustainable development and management of inland fisheries and aquaculture in the country, All concerned stakeholders are encouraged to give due cognizance effect to these guidelines while framing a legislation on inland fisheries and aquaculture.

