

3. World Fisheries Day – Environment

India’s fisheries and aquaculture, its promising course. On World Fisheries Day 2025, the FAO emphasized India’s "Blue Transformation" to boost sustainable seafood exports and modernize the sector through aquaculture-led growth. To support this, India is leveraging initiatives like the Marine Fisheries Census 2025 and the ReALCraft platform to formalize the sector and address challenges like high post-harvest losses.

World Fisheries Day 2025 – Context & Significance

- Observance** – Celebrated annually on November 21.
- Focus** – The FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) emphasized a renewed commitment to India’s Blue Revolution.
- 2025 Theme** – “India’s Blue Transformation – Strengthening Value Addition in Seafood Exports.”
- Key Objectives** – To focus on sustainable growth, value addition, and resilience in fisheries and aquaculture.

Overview of the Fisheries Sector

The sector encompasses all activities related to the cultivation and harvesting of fish and other aquatic organisms. It is critical for global food security, providing protein-rich food and supporting economic development in coastal and rural communities.

Classification of Fisheries Activities

Type of Fishery	Description	Key Examples / Species
Marine Fisheries	Harvesting fish from oceans and seas.	Tuna, Mackerel, Sardines.
Inland Fisheries	Fishing in freshwater bodies like rivers, lakes,reservoirs.	Carp, Catfish, Tilapia.
Aquaculture	Cultivation of aquatic organisms (fish, shellfish, seaweed) in controlled environments (ponds, tanks, marine cages).	General fish and shellfish farming.
Mariculture	A specific subset of aquaculture practiced in marine environments.	Oysters, Shrimp, Seaweed.

Status of the Indian Fisheries Sector

1. Production Milestones

- Growth Trajectory** – Aquatic food production increased drastically from 2.44 million tonnes (1980s) to 17.54 million tonnes (2022–23).
- Global Standing** – India is the 2nd largest fish producer globally, contributing approximately 8% of global output.
- Aquaculture Contribution (FAO SOFIA 2024)** – Global aquaculture production – 130.9 million tonnes (Value – \$313 billion). India’s contribution – 10.23 million tonnes.

2. Coastal & Livelihood Contribution

- Demographics** – 3,477 coastal fishing villages account for 72% of fish production.
- Employment** – Supports over 30 million livelihoods, specifically in coastal and rural regions.
- Export Dominance** – These villages contribute 76% of seafood exports.
- Shrimp Farming** – India is a global leader in shrimp farming, specifically Black Tiger Shrimp and Prawns.

3. Export Performance

- Growth** – Marine product exports rose by 11.08% recently.
- Value** – Increased from US\$0.81 Billion (Oct 2024) to US\$0.90 Billion (Oct 2025).

4. Drivers of Growth

- Structural Shift** – Transition from capture fisheries to aquaculture-led expansion.
- Innovation** – Technological advancements in hatcheries, feed management, breeding, and disease control.
- Modernization** – Increased private sector participation and infrastructure upgrades.
- Governance** – Strong institutional and policy support from the government.

FAO Collaboration with India

Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) – Focuses on strengthening fishing ports for environmental, social, and economic improvements.

Target Ports – Vanakbara (Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Diu) and Jakhau (Gujarat).

Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) – Supported small-scale fishers and improved sea safety. Enhanced post-harvest management and promoted sustainable fishing technologies.

BOBLME Project (Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem) – Assisted India in adopting the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM). Implemented National Plans of Action to combat IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fishing.

Sustainable Aquaculture in Andhra Pradesh – Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Promotes climate-resilient, reduced-footprint aquaculture. Guided by Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) and Ecosystem Approach to Aquaculture (EAA)

Significance of the Sector

Economic Contribution – Vital for GDP, especially in states with extensive coastlines.

Food Security – A primary source of protein and vital nutrients for millions, ensuring global food security.

Employment – A major source of direct and indirect jobs (fishermen, processing plant workers, aquaculture staff).

Rural Development – Offers income opportunities for small-scale fishers in remote, underserved, and coastal areas.

Key Challenges

Environmental Pressures – Excessive coastal fishing and juvenile catch have depleted nearshore stocks. Reduced availability of key species like sardines and mackerel on both East and West coasts.

Habitat Degradation – Loss of seagrass beds. Harbour pollution and coastal sedimentation damaging nursery habitats.

Socioeconomic Constraints – Small-scale fishers lack access to finance, modern technology, and formal markets.

Post-Harvest Losses – India loses nearly 15–20% of fish post-harvest. Caused by poor traceability, inadequate cold chains, and limited value addition.

Inclusivity – Need to ensure equitable growth for women, smallholders, and vulnerable communities.

Institutional and Policy Support

Blue Revolution & PMMSY – Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) promotes integrated development.

Infrastructure Created – 730 cold storages/ice plants, 26,348 fish transport facilities, and 6,410 fish kiosks.

National Fisheries Policy (Draft 2020) – Focuses on sustainable harvest, resource conservation, and climate resilience.

Institutional Agencies

ICAR – Research and institutes.

NFDB – National Fisheries Development Board.

MPEDA – Marine Products Export Development Authority (Quality control & exports).

Coastal Aquaculture Authority – Regulatory oversight.

Key Government Initiatives

1. Marine Fisheries Census 2025 (MFC 2025)

Motto – “Smart Census, Smarter Fisheries.”

Objective – Geo-reference 1.2 million fisher households across 5,000 villages.

Technology – Uses VyAS-NAV, VyAS-BHARAT, and VyAS-SUTRA apps for real-time data to enable evidence-based policymaking.

2. PM-MKSSY (Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana) – Provides financial incentives and insurance premium support. Focuses on the formalization of enterprises and risk mitigation.

3. FIDF (Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund) – Offers concessional financing for harbours, cold chains, and processing units. Benefit – Interest subvention of 3% per annum for 12 years (including a 2-year moratorium).

4. Climate-Resilient Coastal Fishermen Villages Programme – Upgrades coastal villages with cyclone-resistant housing. Installs early warning systems and supports diversified livelihoods.

5. EEZ Sustainable Harnessing Rules, 2025 – Provides priority fishing access to cooperatives. Bans destructive fishing practices to protect marine biodiversity. Introduces the ReALCraft Access-Pass.

6. ReALCraft Platform

Definition – A web-based, open-source platform for online registration and licensing of fishing vessels.

Functionality – Enables end-to-end digital processing (remote submission, e-payments). Issues digital Registration Certificates (RC) and License Certificates (LC).

Way Forward

Sustainable Practices – Adopt eco-friendly techniques and strengthen the implementation of sustainable fishing norms.

Technological Integration – Use satellite mapping, digital tracking, and data analytics to monitor stocks and prevent overfishing.

Small-Scale Support – Improve access to finance, markets, and technology for marginalized communities and women.

Infrastructure Upgrade – Expand cold chains and processing facilities to drastically reduce the 15-20% post-harvest wastage.

Climate Resilience – Scale up adaptive management strategies and climate-resilient aquaculture models (like the AP model).

Data-Driven Decisions – Leverage GIS and remote sensing to combat IUU fishing and manage fish populations effectively.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indias-fisheries-and-aquaculture-its-promising-course/article70303947.ece>

