

Aquaculture output offers hope amid climate impact on fisheries

The sector has been witnessing a steady growth even as state's fish supply is declining

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KERALA'S aquaculture sector is witnessing steady growth, offering hope for the state's fish supply in the face of declining marine production due to climate change. Officials with the fisheries department said that nearly 50,000 farmers are currently engaged in aquaculture activities, and the number is expected to increase in the coming years.

According to the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kerala's marine fish production registered a marginal decline of 4% in 2024 compared to the previous year, dropping to 0.61 million tonnes. The decrease has been attributed to the impact of cyclonic storms, rising sea temperatures, and increased heat-wave days that affected fishing activities. While oil sardine landings saw a slight improvement, other major species — such as Indian mackerel — witnessed a steep fall. In the long



run, however, the growing aquaculture production would help the state bridge the supply gap, the officials noted.

"So far, we haven't recorded an alarming drop in fish production. But climate change is expected to impact marine catch in the future. We are already preparing for such a situation and many farmers are showing keen interest in aquaculture. The department is providing financial support and necessary training to promote the sector," a senior fisheries department official told TNIE.

Aquaculture production in state (in tonnes)

2016-2017	28,476
2017-2018	24,198
2018-2019	24,511
2019-2020	25,087
2020-2021	34,987
2021-2022	37,521
2022-2023	38,172
2023-2024	40,852
2024-2025	41,175

(Source: Kerala Fisheries Department)

Currently, aquaculture activities are most prominent in districts such as Alappuzha, Kollam and Kottayam. Data with the fisheries department show a consistent rise in aquaculture production over the past eight years — from 28,476 tonnes in 2016-17 to 41,175 tonnes in 2024-

25. Farmers too have reported positive trends in the sector.

"I have been engaged in fish farming for 13 years in around 12 acres. I've never faced a loss so far. Earlier, farmed fish didn't have much demand, but now, due to the high price of marine fish and changing consumer habits, it is getting wider acceptance. I mainly cultivate pangasius, rohu, and catla, and there's good demand for them," said Martin Joseph, a fish farmer from Thalayolaparambu.

However, small-scale farmers have voiced concerns about limited market access.

"I have aquaculture in one acre. Large buyers don't approach small farms as we can't offer bulk quantities. As a result, it's difficult to secure space in the market. If the government creates a system to connect small farmers directly with buyers, more people will take up aquaculture," said Chandy Joseph, a farmer from Kollam.