**Baseline study for Fisheries Development in Telangana state**

**ANN – 5.11**

**5.11.1 Highlights on DOF –Free seed supply program**

Fish seed supply support to facilitate fishers to stock all water bodies is one of the path-breaking initiatives of DOF in recent years. The state has realized that input cost for purchase of seed is one of (only) the major costs incurred by Fishermen Cooperative Societies. Fishermen operating at small scale will incur more overhead cost like transport, etc to procure seed from faraway places. Due to various reasons, PFCS are dependent on intermediaries for supply of fish seed and enter into buy back arrangements of produced fish in turn. At times, this leads to exploitation where fair price is not provided to the fishermen.

The initiative was pursued with all efforts and objectives of bailing out fishers from the existing practice of self stocking by sharing the cost among member/seeking support of merchants in majority of cases. The fishers were getting entangled into the clutches of merchants by way of long term commitment of supplying the harvested fish from their water bodies for lower prices. In the present practice of fish seed stocking of water bodies, in most instances, the merchants had the say and was in accordance to his advantages, skewed towards meeting his interest of growing bigger size fish that enjoy better market price and not in the interest of harnessing the productivity of water bodies and overall income to the fishers. The stocking is not in accordance to scientific approaches and harnessing optimum production and sustainability. Over 80% of the fishers are in this tie-up for fish seed stocking arrangements

Lack of reserve funds in the society accounts, difficulty in raising funds from the members, multiple ownership of resource within FCS and a lack of collective commitments to build capital for the society and financial strengthening have resulted in situation of seeking support of merchants. The seed cost is one of the most important expenditure component in the production cost with a share of over12-15%of operation cost. Inadequacy in availability and accessibility of seed, exclusive dependence on outsourced seed from neighbouring states of AP, Karnataka, etc., high seed cost and associated transactional cost, quality issues in supply of seed have constrained fishers to join hands with the merchants on the earlier occasions.

* Access to quality fish seed is central to resource development by the PFCS and the initiative of the state to provide better access is regarded as strong positive move for the sector growth.
* The initiative of DOF has ensured better access to better quality cultivable carp fish seed for stocking water bodies to enhance fish production, profitability and employment, better livelihood gains, income and welfare of fishers.
* The coverage of more area (water bodies) during the current year and more so the seed support for stocking GP tanks which were mainly neglected from fish seed stocking by FCS/ fishers is a positive move and is anticipated to contribute significantly for both fish production and family nutrition. These resources though characterized with limited water holding yet contribute significantly for the rural nutrition and family level income.
* Considering the ongoing trend at the grass root level, it is likely that the new initiatives will be supportive in bailing out fishers from the present arrangement with the merchants and put on track to build on their own.
* The new initiative is also expected to enhance resource productivity and fish production in years to come and fishers will realize the positive impact in terms of higher fish productivity.
* The outcome of seed stocking during 2016-17 is showing positive results in this direction, and the early stocking initiatives undertaken during the current year 2017-18 is a good improvement and has sent positive signals of assured stocking support by the DOF.
* Partly, some of the FCS has come out from society stocking saving considerable sum of money for the members and also from their effort of sourcing fish seed from neighbouring states.
* It is anticipated that this initiative of DOF is empowering for a gradual transition of fisher’s society to new dimension of self reliance in later years, minimizing their dependence on merchants and are expected to enhance collective bargaining powers of FCS in the sector related activities.

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| **DOF fish seed supply program**   * State prioritized stocking of all water bodies suit able for development of fisheries and aquaculture by way of supplying free fish seed * This step is very encouraging and highly promising from the fisher’s point of view. This would enhance the profitability of fishing activity and enhance e fishermen income. However, if this is just a temporary support, it would not have desired impact. * Studies conducted show that the FCS have not cultivated the practice of saving and building up of financial strength at the institutional level and hence heavily depend on external support which is provided by merchants. If the seed supply scheme is discontinued, merchants might re-enter the scene * The overall perception of the fishermen has been that the growth of fish seed supplied by the DOF for stocking has been low due to delay in supply and also poor seed quality. DOF program of early stocking this year is a good decision and it would result in enhanced yield. * Although DOF managed to comply target fish seed stocking but it did not taking to account the consequences and overall impact on production at that point of time * Less involvement of fishers in the process, lack of participatory approaches * Complaints of fishers on seed size, varieties and number supplied * Double stocking and over-stocking of seed in most instances during 2016-17 and has marginally reduced by 30-40% in the current year * It was possible to enhance fish seed though marginally aspects of varieties, density, size at stocking, ratio and healthy of seed need attention to achieve anticipated success of intervention |

**5.11.2 View of fishermen on stocking**

* The initiative has contributed in a limited way of 30-40% of production enhancement during the first year of its implementation (2016-17) itself
* Seed supply should be ensured by Government through its own source in a phased manner by enhancing its internal production capacities both under govt. and private sector.
* Govt. should help FCS in seed rearing activities, promote and support spawn/ fry rearing to fingerlings/ advance fingerlings/ stunted /yearlings
* The present outsourcing of seed and supply process should be changed in view of large scale seed mortality and prevailing inefficiency in the systems.

**5.11.3 Fish seed procurement**

The state at present is heavily dependent on erstwhile state Andhra Pradesh to meet its seed requirement although there are efforts to internalise seed production. The state is giving preference to state seed suppliers. In reality the spawn is brought from AP and reared in the state which adds to cost. This has also lead to unhealthy competition as the state seed suppliers will have to depend for spawn on hatcheries placed in AP. The seed outsourcing is done by E-tendering /procurement process at district level. There is a technical committee for to oversee the procurement process including a site visit to a prospective bidder.

**5.11.4 Process limitations**

* Emphasis now has been only to meet the target of fish seed stocking and in the process the quality issues are taken back seat and will have negative repercussion on the fish production and profitability performance.
* In the present arrangement of procurement, the committee only looks in to the capacity of bidder to supply required seed based on the infrastructure availability viz. the number of ponds, farm area.
* Quality aspects of source of breeders, their health status, size and age at breeding, hatching, nursery and rearing protocols are not given much importance.
* There is a strong perception that many times the seed supplied by bidders is not as per the bidding document conditions. There is variation in size, quantity and the quality of seed supplied and also mixing of species.
* The seed also undergo stress during transportation and resulting in 20-30% mortality on arrival itself.
* Further the seed is also not supplied on time and these results in poor growth and less production.
* It was also expressed that the seed supplier supplies at his convenience than that of the fish farmers.