

Report

**Enabling Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Fisheries (E3F):
Stakeholders' Meet and Policy Roundtable Conference**
Organized by
Fisheries Economics, Extension and Statistics Division
ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai
Date: 11 March 2026



Under the aegis of the Industry-Academia Collaboration Programme of ICAR-CIFE, the Fisheries Economics, Extension and Statistics (FEES) Division of ICAR–CIFE, Mumbai organized “Enabling Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Fisheries (E3F): Stakeholders’ Meet and Policy Roundtable Conference” on 11 March 2026. The objectives of this event were to bring all stakeholders on a common platform and promote innovation and entrepreneurship in fisheries and aquaculture, strengthen linkages among start-ups and institutions, and encourage policy dialogue for fisheries ecosystem development.

The organizing team was led by Patron Dr. N.P. Sahu, Director (Acting), ICAR–CIFE, Mumbai, and Convenor Dr. Arpita Sharma, Head of the FEES Division. The team of experts included Heads of Divisions Dr. Debajit Sarma and Dr. K.N. Mohanta. Organizing Secretaries were Dr. Neha W. Qureshi and Dr. Prasenjit Pal, Senior Scientists, while Coordinators Dr. Ankush Kamble and Dr. Shivaji Argade, Senior Scientists, ensured smooth execution. Student coordinators Vijendra Kumar, Talib Mohammad, Benu Kumari and all students of FEES division contributed significantly to the programme’s success.

The inaugural programme began with Dr. Arpita Sharma welcoming the Chief Guest Dr. Sujeet Kumar Shukla, Director, ICAR–Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology (CIRCOT), Mumbai, Dr. Debajit Sarma, Director In-charge, ICAR–CIFE, Mumbai and participants, stressing the significance of entrepreneurial initiatives and their transformative impact on communities and the broader ecosystem.

Dr. Debajit Sarma, Director In-charge, ICAR–CIFE, Mumbai, spoke in detail about entrepreneurship, underlining its role in shaping sustainable livelihoods and strengthening the fisheries sector.

Chief Guest Dr. Sujeet Kumar Shukla, Director, ICAR–CIRCOT), Mumbai, emphasized that young minds should aspire to be creators rather than job seekers, highlighting the importance of innovation and self-reliance.

During the inaugural programme, “Innovation Booklet” was released by the Chief Guest, showcasing the creativity of the students of FEES Division. Various exhibits developed by students were displayed and visited by resource persons. These included extension advisory platforms such as Bharat Prasar: Next Gen AI and ML Powered Extension Advisory Systems and Aquagauge: An AI and ML powered Fish Growth and Health Estimator. Innovative apps like Meen Sathi (all fisheries schemes in one place) and Apna App (buy and sell aqua products anytime). Value-added products such as FishUwish meal kits and protein-enriched Fish Bread were highlighted, while products from weed plants demonstrated new opportunities for entrepreneurship. Waste-to-wealth initiatives included Mobile Quick Scale for converting discarded fish scales into high-value products, FishANUre® manure from fish waste, and patented CIFE-Shubh Leather made from discarded fish skins were displayed.

The programme had different sessions and the deliberations in these sessions are presented.

Technical Session 1: Experience Sharing by Resource Persons: This session brought together distinguished resource persons who shared their diverse experiences across fisheries, cooperatives, rural development, and entrepreneurship. Smt. Ujjawala Patil, founder of Daryawardhi Producer Company Ltd., Mumbai emphasized women's economic empowerment by organizing nearly 1,000 women into 59 Self Help Groups. Smt. Raghini B, from NGO Vrutti Catalyst, Bengaluru focused on improving the livelihoods of small-scale producers through resilient practices and stronger market linkages. Shri. Paresh Pimpale from NGO Ecofolks highlighted ocean advocacy, creating platforms to connect stakeholders and launching the Ocean Film Festival to raise awareness about climate change and marine ecosystems. Shri. Ravindra Amrutkar, CEO of Cardion Correct International Foundation, Nashik mentioned the cage culture initiatives and waste-to-manure projects, while Shri. Apoorv Singh from Integrated Rural Aquaculture Development Association (IRADA), Lucknow, showcased the scaling of FPOs, supporting over 3,550 farmers. Shri. Rishikesh Kashyap from COFFED, Patna, Bihar shared cooperative activities combining magur fish farming with GI-tagged Makhana cultivation and promoting welfare schemes like the Matsya Kisan Credit Card. Smt. Elsie Gabriel, Ocean Literacy and Climate Action Leader and pioneer in Accessible and Inclusive Ocean Tourism discussed about her initiatives on ocean literacy and inclusive scuba diving for handicapped. Md. Hasan Maslai a progressive farmer mentioned about his business of organic farming through bio-products.

Dr. Rupali Khalonkar from Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas, IIT-Bombay presented rural technology solutions, including mobile sub-zero coolers and solar hybrid distillers to reduce post-harvest losses. Dr. Manjit Kaur Chauhan, Head of Resource Management, SNTD Women's University, addressed women entrepreneurship and economic empowerment and discussed startup incubation through the WISE platform, supporting women entrepreneurs with guidance and networking. Dr. Amit N. Borkar from VAMNICOM, Pune emphasized cooperative frameworks, highlighting democratic functioning and the role of non-credit fisheries cooperatives in community development. Finally, Dr. Manas Kumar Sinha from the Fishery Survey of India, Mumbai spoke on institutional roles in fisheries development. He provided a national policy perspective, the approval of infrastructure projects under FIDF, and the NFDP portal.

Together, these insights underscored the diversity of approaches from grassroots empowerment and cooperative models to technological innovation and national policy that are driving transformation in the fisheries and rural development ecosystem.

Technical Session 2: Startup Stories – Struggles and Triumphs: This session highlighted the journeys of fisheries and aquaculture startups, showcasing their innovations, challenges, and successes. Dr. Krantisagar More Operations Incharge Greenlaxmi Food Pvt Ltd called for higher funding specifically for branding and market expansion in the startup sector. He shared its pioneering work in developing coconut-based concentrated protein as a sustainable aquaculture feed ingredient. Despite facing hurdles in technology development, funding, and market acceptance, the company strengthened its credibility through certifications such as FSSC 22000, FSSAI, Non-GMO, and organic compliance. Shri. Shashak M. from Panctatva startup in Thane detailed about biogas from waste. Shri. Abhijit Naohate, CEO and founder Corel Life Care, (FEES division ICAR-CIFE alumni and participant of famous show shark tank) presented journey of his startup founded in 2023, which develops bio-formulations and

health management products for aquatic animals. Smt. Suvarna Sandip Warde described her diversified entrepreneurship under the Kasturi brand, which includes Kasturi Restaurant, Kasturi Villa, Kasturi Gruh Udyog, and fisheries products. Her enterprise produce value-added products such as masalas, pickles, papads, chutneys, and millet-based foods, while also promoting sustainable practices through bioenzymes and organic fertilizers. Shri. Nitin Nikam shared challenges and opportunities from Isapur Hatchery and motivated the participants towards entrepreneurship. Shri. Kaustubh Sandip Warde, a marine biologist and scuba diver, shared his work on sharks, rays, and traditional fishing practices like shore seine fisheries. He actively engages with fishing communities through outreach and awareness programmes, while also exploring entrepreneurial ventures such as ornamental fish breeding and freshwater pearl farming.

The session concluded with a discussion on policy and ecosystem support for fisheries startups. Speakers emphasized the need for startup-friendly policies, simplified licensing systems. Institutions like ICAR–CIFE and its ABI were recognized and appreciated for their potential role in providing incubation support, and conducting training programmes. Encouraging innovation, skill development, and collaboration was identified as key to strengthening the fisheries startup ecosystem. This session captured the resilience and creativity of entrepreneurs.

Thereafter, students presented their start-up pitches and some of these were FishUwish, a seafood meal kit concept; Nutri Fish Loaf, a protein-enriched bread; and BroodNet: A digital broodstock registry.

Technical Session 3: Issues in Enabling the Startup Ecosystem in Fisheries: This session focused on issues in enabling the start-up ecosystem, with detailed theme-wise discussions. The third technical session was divided into two thematic groups, each addressing critical challenges and opportunities in building a robust fisheries entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Group 1: Cooperatives, NGOs, and FPOs: Smt. Ujwala Patil highlighted persistent market barriers faced by women-led enterprises and called for gender-responsive policies to empower women entrepreneurs. Shri. Rishikesh Kashyap emphasized the need for fisheries department oversight in pond construction, restoration of traditional water bodies, and leadership training in cooperatives. Shri. Ravindra Amrutkar identified untapped aquaculture potential in Maharashtra. Shri. Apoorv Singh advocated for FPOs to serve as extension hubs. Dr. Amit Borkar stressed the importance of scientific assessments of trainings.

Group 2: Startups and Institutions: Dr. Manas Kumar Sinha underscored the need for stakeholder consultations, merit-based subsidies linked to technical eligibility. He emphasized that subsidies should act as catalysts for independence rather than permanent support. Dr. Manjit Kumar Chauhan addressed gender equity, urging deployment of community resource persons to assist fishers. Dr. Krantisagar More focused on strengthening the startup ecosystem by increasing awareness of global funding opportunities, leveraging NIPAM for branding and visibility, and prioritizing funding for value addition and market expansion.

The day concluded with the consolidation of key recommendations and policy inputs by Dr. Prasenjit Pal, Senior Scientist, FEES Division, encouraging remarks by Dr. K.N. Mohanta,

Head FNBP division and vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Ankush Kamble, Senior Scientist, FEES Division.

The programme witnessed participation of 45 resource persons from a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including NGOs, FPOs, cooperatives, startups, industry, progressive farmers, policy makers and academia from different parts of Maharashtra (Mumbai, Pune, Alibag, Thane, Raigadh, Palghar, Sidhudurg), Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and more along with ABI team of CIFE, all staff and students of FEES Division.. The event reflected the synergy of industry, academia, and community stakeholders, aligning with the vision of sustainable development and *Viksit Bharat 2047*.





