

# Strategies for Fisheries Development of Kharagpur Lake

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**T**HE State of Bihar is blessed with potentially rich and varied aquatic resources. There is a vast avenue for the growth of the aquaculture sector in Bihar. Although Bihar is a landlocked and agriculturally dominated state, it has vast untapped inland water resources in the form of tanks, ponds, chauras, mauns, reservoirs and rivers, which can profitably be utilised for producing fish and congenial agro-climatic conditions for the development of aquaculture. Despite the abundance of aquatic resources of Bihar in terms of about 3,200 hectares of rivers, 5,00,000 hectares flood plain wetlands area, 9000 hectares of ox-bow lakes or mauns, 25,000 hectares of reservoirs and 80,000 hectares of ponds and tanks, fish supply is always short of demand in the state. Bihar, being an inland state, has identified inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture as potential sectors for the state, and the government promotes the utilisation of its fishery resources.

As per the report by Ahmad in 2001 titled “Development of Freshwater Aquaculture in Bihar”, the ponds and tanks in Bihar can produce 0.183 million fish per year. According to another report by the Planning Commission, a large section of the total population (53.5%) lives below the poverty line. The average size of the land holdings is very small, with marginal (<1 ha) and small (1-2 ha) farmers constituting about 84.2 and

9.2%, respectively. The state is ranked lowest in the country regarding per capita income. Out of the total 150 disadvantaged districts identified by the Planning Commission, 15 districts are in Bihar. The frequent occurrence of floods and drought is also common in the state affecting agricultural production and rural livelihood. In the final report of an NAIP-3 project focusing on livelihood improvement of disadvantaged districts of Bihar, the state is identified as a true example of a “resource-rich state” inhabited by ‘poor people’ and as a “high potential low productivity” state offering tremendous scope for evolving effective strategies for delivering rural services and for implementing local institutional arrangements to improve livelihoods of the rural poor through agriculture-based activities.

Agricultural advancements, including fisheries, are crucial for enhancing livelihoods in Bihar, where more than 85% of the population relies on agriculture, either directly or indirectly. The scope for fisheries development in Bihar is vast, given the state’s abundant water resources and significant population dependent on agriculture. With numerous rivers, ponds, and water bodies, Bihar has the potential to enhance fish production and meet both local and regional demand. Expanding fisheries can diversify income sources for farmers, create employment opportunities, and contribute to