

Better profit margin for fish growers in Bihar

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Yogi in his Kailash Fish Hatchery in Dharbhanga. Photo: Special Arrangement

Fish farming is an important and fast growing sector in Bihar.

The state has immense natural aquatic resources in the forms of ponds and tanks where quality fish seed are required for good fish production.

“The gap existing between demand and supply of fish seed provide huge opportunities for unemployed youth to invest in fish seed production sector of aquaculture” says Dr. Tun Tun Singh, fisheries extension officer, office of Deputy Director, fisheries, Darbhanga.

Mr. Yogi Sahani in Jagdishpur village, Darbhanga, was attracted to venture in fish seed business because of a high profit margin in Northeastern

states. Initially he used to buy fish spawns from Naihati, Kolkata, and other local fish seed producers from in Bihar.

Gross income

Today Mr. Sahani's hatchery unit generates a gross income of Rs 50 lakh a year from sale of carp spawns, fry and fingerlings (different stages in fish growth) alone.

A family of nine members with three acres of agricultural land and 0.5 acre pond, Mr. Sahani could barely meet the basic needs of his family about 10 years back. Dr Tun Tun Singh, fisheries extension officer during a routine village tour, met him and advised him to start a Hapa breeding pond to raise fish spawns at very low cost.

Hapa breeding is a low cost technique to produce different fish spawns in a captive net inside the pond. From 2006 till 2008 Mr. Sahani took a two acre pond on an annual lease and did the same.

Five lakhs

In three years he was able to earn Rs. 5 lakh which raised his confidence to venture into establishing a carp seed hatchery unit.

In 2009, the fisheries department officials helped him in establishing the unit in his three acre land.

Initially the farmer invested Rs. 7 lakh out of which Rs. 5 lakh was from his own saving and Rs. 2 lakh was borrowed from several private moneylenders at exorbitant interest rate of five percent a month. The hatchery was named Kailash Matshya hatchery.

Bank loan

A project report was prepared and a loan of Rs. 15 lakh was sanctioned from a nationalised bank. The loan amount was used for constructing some more carp hatchery units.

The unit over a period of time improved from producing about 12 million fries to gradually 20 million fries in three acres.

Keeping in view of the growing demand for fingerlings Mr. Sahani outsourced a 50 acre pond from a private pond owner. Presently he has 26 ponds in 53.5 acre area under his supervision.

Subsidy

The fish farmer also got a subsidy of Rs 3 lakh for the project from the State govt and was conferred the Best farmer award in 2012 by the Bihar agriculture University.

“My gross income in 2013-14 was over Rs. 50 lakh. I earned Rs. 25 lakh as a net profit. I have repaid all bank and private loans within two years,” says Mr. Sahani.

His customers are mainly from North-West part of Bihar, particularly from Madhubani, Darbhanga, Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Bettiah and Vaishali districts. These fish farmers travel long distance to purchase the fish seeds from Kailash hatchery because of its good quality, fair price and services.

In Bihar especially the government's encouragement towards developing fish seed hatcheries is quite encouraging.

In fact the government and banks welcome new entrepreneurs into this line. Till some years back Mr. Sahani worked as a labour to harvest fish and Makhana from the ponds of big farmers on daily wage basis. But today he has become a role model for nearly 500 fish farmers in the region, according to Dr. Tun Tun.

For more information interested readers can contact
Mr. Yogi Sahani on Mobile: 09934979995 and
Dr.Tun Tun Singh, Mobile: 09473191559/09431086114
email: ttsingh2002@gmail.com