Fisheries Sector: 30 Million Tonne Production Target in 5 Years; National Action Plan for Inland Small-Scale Fisheries

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Why in the News

The Department of Fisheries has begun the process of preparing a separate national action plan for inland small-scale fisheries (the sector catching/rearing fish on a small scale in rivers, ponds and inland water bodies). As part of this, a two-day national workshop was held in Bhopal (PIB, 23 October 2026).

Key Facts

- **Target:** the goal is to take fish production to 30 million tonnes and seafood exports to ₹1.25 lakh crore in the next 5 years.
- **Current position:** annual production is 19.7 million tonnes, of which inland fisheries account for about three-fourths; seafood exports are over ₹70,000 crore (figures quoted in the statement of Secretary Dr Abhilaksh Likhi).
- **Collaboration:** the action plan will be prepared with the FAO (the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization) and BOBP-IGO (Bay of Bengal Programme - Inter-Governmental Organisation) and will be finalised in consultation with fisher communities.
- **Issues:** fishing rights, employment, gender equality, the value chain (the chain from production to market) and climate risk.

Analysis: Between Target and Implementation

Target versus present: production from 19.7 to 30 million tonnes (about a 52% rise in 5 years) and seafood exports from ₹70,000 crore to ₹1.25 lakh crore (about a 79% rise) - both targets are ambitious. These are announcement-level targets; the action plan to achieve them is yet to be prepared, so the difference between the target and the implementation plan should be kept clear.

Why a separate action plan for the small-scale sector: inland fisheries account for about three-fourths of total production, that is, the sector is dominant by volume. The issues raised in the statement - fishing rights, employment, gender equality, the value chain and climate risk - show that the centre of the proposed action plan is not only raising

production but giving formal policy space to the rights and livelihood security of small-scale fishing communities. Preparation with FAO and BOBP-IGO and in consultation with fisher communities signals participation in its process.

Limitation: the figures are quoted in the Secretary's statement. The action plan is at the development stage; its provisions, budget and timeline are not yet fixed - it should not be taken as final policy.

Mains Practice Question

Question: Assess the significance of the initiative to prepare a separate national action plan for the inland small-scale fisheries sector. Discuss the sector's major challenges and the role of community participation in policymaking. (GS-III: Agriculture and the Blue Economy; 250 words)

From the Exam Point of View

Prelims: production target and current figures, the share of inland fisheries, FAO and BOBP-IGO. **Mains (GS-III):** the blue economy, livelihoods and policy participation of small-scale fishing communities.

Sources and Limitations

- PIB (Department of Fisheries), 23 October 2026 (read): https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2327362
- **Limitations:** the figures are quoted in the Secretary's statement; the action plan is still at the development stage and will be final after consultation.