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## Growth Of Fisheries: A Brief Analysis Of Baksa District Of Assam State (India)

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### **Abstract:**

Fishery sector is an important source of income to a large number of rural population of Assam and it is also a vital source of revenue for the state economy. Assam is blessed with sufficient water resources comprising rivers, beels derelict water bodies, reservoirs and pond/ tank. This study focuses Fishery resources of Baska District, contribution of Baksa District Fisheries to the Assam economy. It also highlights problems of fisheries of Baksa District and some remedial measures to solve the problems.

**Key words :** Fishery sector, Fishery Resources, Problems of Fishery sector.

### **Introduction :**

A beautiful topical climate is available for development of fresh water fish culture in variety aquatic bodies. Aquaculture plays a significant role in nutritional also in the rural economy of the state. Fish and Rice are the two principal diets of the Assamese people. For 95% population of Assam, fish is an important protein rich food. The state currently produces about 4.43 Lakh tonnes of fish from all sources annually. The present demand of fish is 4.47 lakh tones on the basis of 13 kg per capital consumption. (Annual Report 2023-24, Fisheries Director, Assam) Inspite of the vast aquatic resources, the state has not been able to produce substantial amount of fish to meet up the increasing demand of fish eating population of the state. Of late, the natural fish production is gradually declining, so aquaculture has been recognized as one of the alternative source to produce ample amount of fish in the state. The fish seed is the major input for fish farming, it has always a growing demand for quality fish. The Directorate of Economics and statistics, Assam, reported that the production of fish seed in the state became 20843.00 million fry during the year 2022-23. During this period 582 hatcheries were in operation. However , one of the big obstacle experienced in expanding aquaculture industry in the state is the lack of sufficient quality fish seeds.

As a result there could be a large scale mortality during the early stage of fish. It is occurred due to unhealthy fish seeds or lack of proper care in nursing the fish seeds to advanced fingerling size. In many parts of Assam especially in the Nagaon District alone about 45 Chinese eco-hatcheries have been constructed each investing a few lakh of rupees. It is a right time to adopt action-prone policy to look into different types of low-cost hatchery designs suitable for different categories.

Fish is water born resources. A Large section of people in Baksa district particularly landless and economically backward section people meet up their own requirements of fish by own catch or through inland fisheries. Now, a small section of population has involved fishery activities on commercial basis and getting opportunity to earn a good amount of income from fishery. Fish is one of the main items of food for most of the people in Baksa District of Assam, where almost 90% people of the district are fish eaters. So, the demand for fish is very high or increasing considerably. The demand of fish were 12364656 kg annually during 2021-22 but supply was only 9000530.00 kg. Again in 2022-23 per annum requirement of fish was 1259 6084 kg but production was only 9756360.00 kg (Statistical Hand book, 2022 & 2023)

### **Area of the study :**

Baksa district was carved out of a part of Nalbari, Barpeta, Kamrup and small portion of Darrang District, following a historic BTC (Bodoland Territorial Council) agreement signed on February, 10, 2023, formed BTAD (Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District) with four district namely, Udalguri, Baksa., Chirang and Kokrajhar. Though, there is no common opinion regarding the original word 'Baksa' a considerable people prefer to use "Baksa" in lieu of "Baksa". Some social thinkers remarks that the name "Baksa" is originated from Bhutanese Language. According to Bhutanese origin they denoted the area as "Baksa Duar", "Baksa" meaning one kind of rice and "Duar" meaning entrance point. It is known that Bhutanese king ruled these areas for a long time in an around first half of the nineteenth century. On this ground, it couldn't be ruled out the possibility that the name "Baksa" or "Baksa" had not a Bhutanese origin.

The growth of Fisheries in Assam is creating self-employment opportunities and income source to the rural people in the state. Now it is observed that the unemployed youths of Baksa district also accepting this fishery sector as the source of income and their livelihood. There is a large scope and potentiality to develop of fishery sector in the district. If proper attention pays towards this sector it will help to eradicate rural poverty and unemployment from the area and will boosts up the standard of living of the rural people.

### **Methodology :**

The study was conducted in Baksa district only. Both primary and secondary data has been used in this study. Primary data were collected through survey and interview methods. Specially Baksa district fishery office (Headed by Fishery Development officer) has been surveyed and interview has also been taken to

the owner of the fishery farming in Baksa district. On the otherhand, secondary data were collected from the Books, magazines , journals, newspaper and internet.

### **Fishery Resources in the Baksa district :**

Fishery can be considered as the rapid growing business particularly for the rural people of Assam. It can provide self employment opportunities and additional income for the local people of the Baksa District, unlike the other district of the state.

There are available fishery resources in Baksa district. These are shown in the following table.

Table : 1 : Fishery Resources in the Baksa District.

| Sl. No. | Particulars                    | Nos   | Area is hect. |
|---------|--------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| 1       | Beel Fisheries                 | 6     | 340.00        |
| 2       | Ponds and Tanks                | 31457 | 2975.00       |
| 3       | Derelict water Bodies / Swamps | 51    | 447.00        |
| 4       | Forest Fisheries               | 19    | 121.00        |
| 5       | River Fisheries                | 14    | 922.0         |
| 6       | Hatcheries (Private)           | 13    | -----         |

Source : Statistical Hand Book, Assam, 2023

From the above Table 1, it is found that total number of Beel fisheries and forest Fisheries were 6 nos and 19 nos followed by 340,00 hect area and 121.00 hect. Area respectively. The ponds and Tanks are huge potential resources in Baksa District. As of now its strength were 31457nos covering total 2975.00 areas hector. Derelict water bodies / swamps area is also available in the District. It has registered 51 Nos and it is occupying 447 area hector. The total River Fisheries in the District were 14 nos and occupied 922.00 area hector in the district.

In spite of having vast scope for development and growth of fisheries in the district, it couldnot produce as per requirement of fish in the District. Although the Government of BTR and the Assam has jointly undertaken some measures for the growth and development of fisheries in Baksa district could not achieved the desired goals.

### **Contribution of Baksa District Fishery Sector to the Assam Economy.**

As a whole, the contribution of fishery sector of Baksa District and BTR to the Assam Economy has been increasing gradually. The production of fish in Baksa District and BTR is shown in the following table -2

Table : 2 : District wise fish production (in tone) in BTR (Assam) . 2021-22 and 2022-23.

| Name of District | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Baksa            | 9001.55   | 9678.40   |
| Udalguri         | 5297.33   | 7666.25   |
| Chirang          | 1207.56   | 1273.54   |
| Kokrajhar        | 6415.21   | 7925.99   |
| BTR              | 21921.54  | 26544.13  |

Source : Statistical Hand book, Government of Assam, 2022,23

The above table 2 indicated that the fish production of Baksa district was 9001.55 tonnes in 2021-22 and it jumped to 9678.4 tonnes in 2022-23. In Udalguri District it was 5297.33 tonnes in 2021-22 and it was increased to 7666.2 tons in 2022-23. The production of fish in chirang district slightly increased in 2022-23 comparatively in 2021-22. It was 1207.56 tonnes in 2021-22 and it rose to 1273.54 tonnes in 2022-23. Similarly the production of fish in Kokrajhar District was 6415.21 tonnes in 2021-22 and it augmented to 7925.99 tonnes in 2022-23. The highest contribution came from Udalguri District to the total production among the four District of BTR. The total production of fish of the entire BTR was 21,921.65 tonnes in 2021-22 and it jumped to 26,544.13 tonnes in 2022-23. These can be distinctly highlighted with the help of the following diagram.

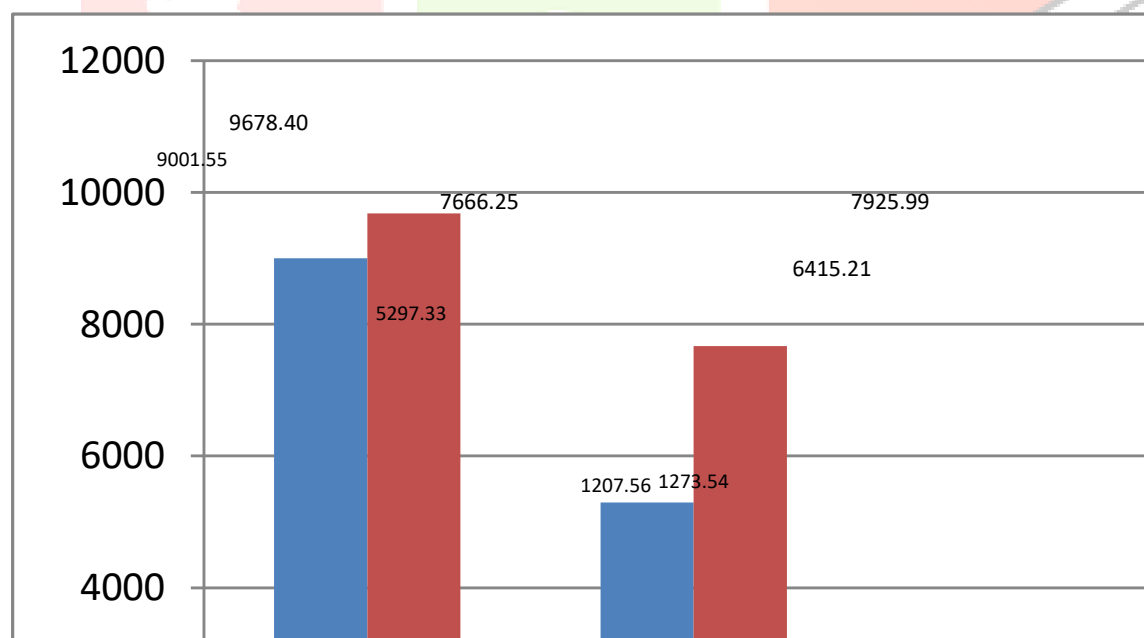


Diagram : Fish product (in tones ) in four districts of BTR, 2021-22 – 2022-23

The increased production of fish in four Districts of BTR represented by the above Diagram. Here Blue Bar Diagram and Red Bar Diagram indicates the year 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively.

District wise Production of fish seed in BTR, 2021-22 – 2022-2023 (Fry in Million Nos)

| Name of District | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|------------------|---------|---------|
| Baksa            | 674.00  | 23.94   |
| Udalguri         | 25.00   | 25.00   |
| Chirang          | 7.50    | 4.10    |
| Kokrajhar        | 45.00   | 45.50   |
| BTR              | 751.5   | 98.54   |

The above table reveals that the total production of fish seed in BTR was 751.5 million fry in 2021-22 and it reduced to 98.54 million fry in 2022-23.

### Challenges of Fisheries in Assam

Fishery is an important sector in the state of Assam which provides employment opportunity to a large number of people besides providing nutritional security. With the growth of the State economy, purchasing power of the people, the consumption of fish has been enhanced manifold. Inspire of that, this sector has faced challenges in Assam. Some major challenges are mentioned here –

- (i) Fish seed production and rearing required infrastructure is not sufficient in Assam.
- (ii) The paucity of quality fish seed, feed and other aquaculture inputs is still exist in the state.
- (iii) Ornamental Fishery sector in Assam still remain unorganized.
- (iv) Fish farmers in Assam are not enable to produce fish commercially due to non-availability of adequate credit facility.
- (v) The pace of species diversification and adoption of feed based diversified aquaculture practices is slow.
- (vi) Fish market in Assam is not well organized. Besides it, marketing infrastructure for fish seed and table fish is not good.
- (vii) In Assam, Post harvest infrastructure facility is not satisfactory.
- (viii) Poor insurance coverage to the fish farmers are one of the major problems in Assam.

### Problems faced by fishery sector in Baksa District .

The Fisheries in Baksa District facing various problems, in spite of having huge scope for the growth of fisheries in the District. Some problems are same with the fishery sector in Assam. The major problems faced by the Fishery sector in the District are :- (i) Non-availability of market facilities, (ii) Poor transportation facilities of remote area in Baksa District, (iii) Lack of cold storage facilities, (iv) Lack of

proper Management, (v) Supply of low quality seeds, (vi) Problems of unregulated markets, (vii) No importance to grading for their products, (viii) Lack of collective organization among the fish producers, (ix) Absence of market intelligence or information system etc.

### **Remedial Measures :**

For the upliftment of the fish farmers of Baksa District some points are mentioned here. It will to some extent help not only the fishermen but also helps in the economic development of the study area. These measures are –

- (i) Unless the develop the fishing methods and techniques, the fast growth of fishery sector is not possible in the study area. The department of fishery should take due action in this respect.
- (ii) The traditional social system, social restrictions are followed by the fishermen in the area. It creates obstacle in the path of development in the concernd area. So, this social attitude and attributes should be changed for the development of fishermen in the area.
- (iii) Sound transport and communication system is the primary condition for the development of any sector. So there is an utmost need for the development of transport and communication network to develop the area.
- (iv) Government of Assam, should provide high yielding fish seeds to the fish farmers for the growth of fisheries.
- (v) The department of fishery Assam, should ensure training facilities to the fishermen or owner of the fishery.
- (vi) The government of Assam should provide all kinds of necessary support or assistance in the entire state in remote areas. It will considerably help in the growth of fishery sector in the state.

### **Conclusions and suggestions :**

Assam should reformulate appropriate policy to modernize the fishery sector. It will create a great opportunity for employment to the rural people in Assam. A good number of districts of Assam namely Barpeta, Dhubri, Karimganj, Kamrup, Nagaon, Marigaon, Sibsagar, Sonitpur, Cachar and Baksa which are having potential for the development of fishery resources. So, the government of Assam should undertake viable schemes to develop fishery sector in these District and under this circumstances local educated youths will come forward to adopt fishery activities as a means of livelihood.

The demand for fish has been continuously augmenting in Baksa District in recent years. There is a short fall in domestic supply due to the deficiency in fish production in the District. Therefore, the state of Assam has been importing a huge quantity of fish from the other states like west Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh etc. to make good the increased demand of the consumers in the state. That's why the

government of Assam can attain the goal of self-reliant producing fish at a large scale and simultaneously it will help to earn revenue from the fishery sector.

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