



NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SMALL SCALE FISHWORKERS (INLAND)

March 26, 2020

To
The Director / Commissioner of Fisheries,
[36 States & UTs of India].

Sub: Appeal to Safeguard the Life and Livelihood of Small Scale Fish Workers and Ensure Uninterrupted Supply of Fish in the Face of Corona Virus (COVID-19) Pandemic.

Respected Sir,

We are writing this appeal to you at a time when the country alongwith the world is involved in a united and desperate effort to address the menace of Corona Virus. The Honourable Prime Minister has issued necessary and timely directions in this regard including 21 days' lockdown.

NPSSFW(I), as the national platform for small scale fish workers of the country, has also issued an advisory (copy enclosed) for fish workers and their organisations in the matter.

Fish is essential for food security and nutritional status of the people of our country. More than 80 crores of our citizens eat fish. As such it is imperative that production and distribution of fish should be treated as that of an *Essential Commodity*.

The Government of India in its Guidelines issued under Ministry of Home Affairs Order No. 40-3/2020-D dt.24.03.2020 on the measures to be taken by Ministries/Departments of Government of India, State/Union Territory Authorities for containment of COVID-19 Epidemic in the Country has clearly stated that fish shops will be exempted from the lockdown.

We are given to understand that the Joint Secretary of the Department of Fisheries in the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying under his D.O. letter no. 12035/1/2016-Fy(WU) dt.24.03.2020 has written to Chief Secretaries of all the states and Union Territories to make personal intervention and issue necessary directions to exempt fisheries from the lockdown and allow movement of fish and fish products related to fishers, fish farmers, aquaculture farms and other related commercial establishments.

However, in many areas including both marine and inland sectors, there have been either forcible shutdown of fisheries activities or breakdown of the associated value chain. Around the coast many fishers who have come back from fishing in the sea with their catch cannot deliver it as auction markets are closed and there are no buyers. The fish is left to rot in the boats or dumped in the sea. Closure of fish markets and wholesale fish depots have cut off supply of fish to consumers and have left small scale fishers, fish farmers and fish vendors under the threat of starvation.

In this context, we would request you to kindly ensure that fisheries activities including fishing, fish farming, fish processing and fish vending is allowed to continue with necessary precaution and protection.

We would further request you to ensure that the fish workers affected by the Lockdown get both ration and monthly allowance to tide over their difficulties.



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Specifically, we would request immediate steps to -

- **Ensure continuation of fisheries related activities including fishing, fish farming, fish processing and fish vending;**
- **Provide clear guidelines for undertaking fisheries related activities based on the diversity of the sector to ensure that all fish workers in the value chain are included and their safety addressed;**
- **Supply adequate number of masks with proper instructions on its use and use of soap water;**
- **Ensure that safety and testing equipment is set up at fish-landing sites, as well as at auction and marketing sites to ensure that the conditions for restricting the spread of the virus are met;**
- **Build awareness campaigns in fishing community hubs in collaboration with local fish worker organisations;**

In addition, with regards to the immediate livelihood needs of the fishworkers:

- **Ensure adequate supply of ration with cooking fuel to all fish workers affected by lockdown;**
- **Provide monetary allowance to all fish workers affected by lockdown to attend to other essential needs;**
- **Waive repayment of all government loans to small scale fish workers.**

Thanking you,

With best regards,

Pradip Chatterjee,

Convener, NPSSFW(I)

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