



## NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SMALL SCALE FISHWORKERS

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**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2021

**To:**

Shri Parvatagouda Chandanagouda Gaddigoudar,  
Chairperson, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture (2020-2021),  
[pc.gaddigoudar@sansad.nic.in](mailto:pc.gaddigoudar@sansad.nic.in)

**CC:**

1. All Members, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture (2020-2021);
2. Shri Nagender Singh,  
Executive Officer, Standing Committee on Agriculture (2020-2021), [agricom@sansad.nic.in](mailto:agricom@sansad.nic.in)

**Sub:** Submission to facilitate the examination of Demand of Grants (2021-22) proposed by Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

Sir,

Greetings from the National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (NPSSFW).

NPSSFW represents the livelihood interests of small-scale fishers, fish-farmers and ancillary fish workers across the country together with the need for protection of the natural resource base for fisheries. Since 2016, NPSSFW has consistently engaged in the process of adoption and implementation of policy and statutory matters related to the fisheries sector. We are given to understand that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture is scheduled to consider the Demand of Grants (2021-22) of the Department of Fisheries in the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying on the 22nd and 23rd February, 2021.

In view of this, NPSSFW submits some of the main issues facing the small-scale fisheries sector for your consideration:

1. **Database on Fish Workers:** There is a grave underestimation regarding the number of people engaged in fisheries across the country by categories and by gender. This severely impairs the preparation and implementation of fisheries development and welfare schemes. It is pertinent to develop an exhaustive database on fishers, fish-farmers and ancillary fish workers through issuance of occupational ID cards;
2. **Restoration and Conservation of Natural Resource Base:** It has been a common experience that the natural-resource base for fisheries, both in inland and marine sectors, is on the decline with grim implications on the livelihoods of small-scale fish workers leading food insecurity in micro and localised settings. There has been no initiative on the part of the Government to arrest the drivers of this decline and towards restoration of natural resources;
3. **Adherence to the Principle of Scale Subsidiarity in Budgetary Allocation:** It has also been experienced over the years that the government schemes and assistance for fisheries sector have been designed to favour larger-scale actors, discriminating against the small-scale fisheries sector. This is in spite of the fact that the small-scale fisheries sector is much more sustainable and equitable, in addition to its immense contributions in providing food security and nutritional status to our country;
4. **Access to Government Schemes and Assistance:** It is further experienced that the budgetary allocation provided for the small-scale fisheries sector has been largely unutilised in comparison to the budgetary allocation of the large-scale fisheries sector. This shows that in spite of being more marginalised, the small-scale fisheries sector has less access to government assistance;



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5. **Institutional Credit should not Replace welfare and support structure:** It is pertinent to note that the small-scale fisheries sector has been a self-reliant sector thriving on nature's bounty. Its self-reliance has been weakened through the interventions of external players and interests supported by Government policies. In view of this, provisioning of institutional credit cannot and should not replace welfare and support structures directed towards small-scale fish workers;
6. **Need for Centre-State Coordination – Efficient Function of Federal Structure:** There is a veritable disconnect between the initiatives of the Government of India and various State/UT Governments that hampers the benefits of the budgetary schemes and allocations from reaching the fishing sector generally, and the small-scale fish workers particularly. The federal structure of the Constitution should be made to function more efficiently by institutionalising appropriate mechanisms. In this, it is observed that States/UT representation in the adoption and implementation of national policy and schemes is lacking and needs to be addressed. Conversely, the State/UT governments should also engage themselves more effectively in the preparation and implementation of national policies and schemes and harmonise the state initiatives with the same;
7. **Need for a 'Fisheries Commission' to Oversee, Monitor and Resolve Issues:** It is observed that the fisheries sector in general, and the small-scale fisheries in particular, falters in accessing the rights and entitlements guaranteed to them by the Government. The natural-resource base for fisheries, as well as the trade and consumption of fish and fish products cut across the State and UT boundaries, both inland and marine, of the country. Migration constitutes an important feature of the country's workforce engaged in fisheries. Finally, the fisheries sector has been continuously challenged by activities and processes belonging to other sectors. This gives rise to the need for an institutional mechanism to oversee the realisation of the rights and entitlements, as well as resolution of possible disputes and conflicts. As such, a 'Fisheries Commission' with adequate budgetary allocation is called for;
8. **Areas Neglected in Budget Allocation:**

There has been no budgetary allocation:

  - a. towards **realignment of the fisheries sector** towards more sustainable and equitable practices through the promotion and strengthening of small-scale fish workers and downsizing the large-scale;
  - b. to **promote and strengthen situation of women fish workers** who constitute more than 50% of the fisheries workforce and are more marginalised than their male counterparts;
  - c. to **address the problems of migrant fish workers** laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown exposing the scale of migration in the sector and the unique vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers on account of work in fishing.

Adequate budgetary allocations on the above are vitally important.

For further substantiation/explanation on the above points, please find attached NPSSF's comments on the 'Draft National Fisheries Policy 2020 (6<sup>th</sup> Draft)'.

Sincerely,

Pradip Chatterjee,  
Convener,  
National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers  
(NPSSF).