



Resolution on Small Scale Fishers' and Fish Farmers' Right to Water Bodies

Whereas the small scale fishers and fish farmers livelihood is inseparably and intimately linked to and dependent on water bodies;

And whereas, the small scale fishers and fish farmers are by far the largest primary non-consumptive stakeholders of the water bodies;

And whereas, the small scale fishers and fish farmers are natural custodians of the water bodies because Good Fish Needs Good Water;

And whereas, the small fishers and fish farmers in general do not have any title of the water bodies on which they either catch or farm fish;

And whereas, there is no statutory recognition of the fishers or fish farmers' right over water bodies in which they catch or farm fish;

And whereas the land adjacent to water bodies is important both for the upkeep of the water bodies and the work in fishing by the fish workers;

And whereas, the Government owned water bodies used by small scale fishers and fish farmers are being leased out through auction to highest bidders replacing the small scale fish farmers with investors and entrepreneurs;

And whereas the small scale fish farmers are losing access to privately owned water bodies (ponds, tanks etc.) taken on lease by them due to steep hike in lease rent and competition from investors and entrepreneurs;

And whereas, the small scale fishers and fish farmers are not even informed or consulted, let alone taking their informed consent, while undertaking activities that adversely affect water bodies, fish resources and the livelihood of fishers and fish farmers;

Therefore, it is necessary to recognise the **inalienable right of small scale fishers and fish farmers on water bodies** to protect both the livelihood of the fishing communities and the water bodies that provide the resource base for it;



And therefore, it is proposed that the Government of India and the State Governments enact legislation that may be called “Small Scale Fishers’ and Fish Farmers’ Right Over Water Bodies” to ensure small scale fishers’ and fish farmers’ right to –

- A. Access and protect all natural water bodies (Seas, Rivers, Lakes, Wetlands, Reservoirs) and their fish resources for livelihood;
- B. Access and protect all Government owned water bodies as local stakeholder communities without the condition of lease through auction;
- C. Security of tenure (regulation against eviction and irrational hike in lease rent) on all privately owned water bodies (ponds, tanks etc.) taken on lease by small scale fish farmers.
- D. Security of habitat of fishing communities on land adjacent to water bodies.

Accepted by the National Conference of NPSSFW(I)
New Delhi. July 17, 2019.