

## Assessing the Present and Future Landscape of Fisheries in Assam: Challenges and Opportunities

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### Introduction:

Nestled in the picturesque landscapes of northeastern India, Assam stands as a thriving hub for aquaculture, owing to its abundant water resources. The intricate network of rivers, ponds, wetlands, and beel fisheries not only plays a pivotal role in the local economy but also caters to the nutritional needs of the populace. This comprehensive overview delves into the status of fish farming in Assam, examining its potential, challenges, and promising avenues for future development.

### Aquatic Landscape and Cultural Significance:

Boasting the title of the most water-abundant state in the northeastern region, Assam holds a cultural and dietary reverence for fish, with nearly 90% of the population incorporating it into their daily meals. The traditional practice of fish farming in rural areas has transformed the industry into a vital economic activity, contributing to nutritional security, income augmentation, and overall livelihood improvement. Despite being a biodiversity hotspot, the state faces challenges in fully realizing the potential of its fisheries resources.

### Current Scenario:

While Assam contributes approximately 77% of the total fish production in the northeastern region, the current productivity falls short of its full potential. The chapter explores the reasons behind this shortfall, citing natural calamities and the underutilization of scientific aquaculture practices as contributing factors. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of fish production, available resources, fish diversity, and potential opportunities to enhance fish farming in the state.

### Fisheries Sector Overview:

The chapter presents a vivid tapestry of Assam's fisheries sector, highlighting the extensive network of beel fisheries, ponds, tanks, rivers, forest fisheries, and derelict water bodies. It underscores the adaptability of the fisheries industry, showcasing the allocation of

different water bodies for optimal fish production. With 608 hatcheries producing over 20,843.08 million fish seeds, Assam's commitment to sustaining and enhancing fish populations is evident.

### **Major Fish Species Cultivated:**

Assam's aquaculture landscape features a diverse array of cultivated fish species, including Rohu, Catla, Mrigal, Common Carp, Pangasius, and indigenous varieties such as Assam Valley Carp (AVC). The chapter delves into the recorded diversity of 217 fish species, offering valuable insights into the composition and structure of fish communities in the region.

### **Government Initiatives and Interventions:**

Assam's government actively implements various schemes, such as the Fish & Fish Seed Farming scheme and the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, to enhance fish production, develop infrastructure, and promote sustainable practices. The study explores the impact of these initiatives on the economic contributions of the Fishery and Aquaculture sector to the state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).

### **Challenges Faced by Fish Farmers:**

Fish producers in Assam confront a range of challenges, including production-related issues, price concerns, marketing hurdles, and miscellaneous problems. The chapter sheds light on these challenges, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and a holistic approach to address multifaceted issues affecting productivity and economic well-being.

### **Opportunities and Future Prospects:**

Despite challenges, Assam's fish farming sector presents significant opportunities for growth and development. The chapter explores avenues for export, employment generation, sustainable practices, and diversification to bolster the resilience of the industry. The need for a strategic shift towards sustainable practices, post-harvest measures, value addition, and robust market linkages is emphasized to transform Assam into an exporting state.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, Assam's fish farming sector, nestled in a region teeming with water resources, has immense potential for growth. The government's strategic initiatives, coupled with a focus on sustainability and market-oriented practices, position the state for a prosperous future. The chapter calls for a concerted effort to harness the complete potential of Assam's



fisheries sector, ensuring economic advancement, ecological balance, and the well-being of local communities.

**References:**

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