

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 586
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03 FEBRUARY, 2026

Integrated Paddy-Fish Farming in Pokkali Fields

586. Dr. Shashi Tharoor:

Will the Minister of **FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is true that a proposal has been mooted to permit year-round integrated paddy fish farming in the traditional Pokkali fields of Kerala, departing from the existing seasonal cultivation cycle;
- (b) whether the Government has commissioned or approved any scientific, environmental or agronomic study to assess the feasibility, sustainability and ecological impact of such year-round farming;
- (c) if so, the institution(s) involved, scope of the study, timelines and funding provided;
- (d) whether the Government has examined potential risks to the Pokkali ecosystem, soil salinity balance, biodiversity and long-term productivity; and
- (e) whether the Government will take any policy decision only after placing such scientific findings in the public domain and consulting local farming communities and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING

(SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH ALIAS LALAN SINGH)

- (a) Pokkali is a salt tolerant variety of rice grown in the coastal saline soils of Kerala. Pokkali cultivation has been evolved through ages by the farmers of the area for the maximum utilization of available resources without affecting the ecosystem. After the paddy cultivation, the fields are used for prawn/fish cultivation. In more than 90 percent of single cropped lands, rice cultivation is done during the low saline phase from May-June to September –October. Due to hike in labour cost, agriculture is not being practiced in many fields. A detailed survey of such fields where agriculture is not being practiced and the land is suitable for fish/ prawn farming have been done in Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Malappuram, Kannur districts. As of now, no proposal has been received from the State Government for year-round integrated paddy-fish farming in Pokkali fields, departing from existing seasonal cultivation cycle.

(b) to (e): As informed by the Government of Kerala, a combined survey has been done by the officials of Department of Fisheries, Department of Agriculture and the Local Self Government Department (LSGD) to identify fallow areas suitable for aquaculture, where the paddy farming is not being done for more than three decades. No other scientific, environmental or agronomic studies have been made by the Department of Fisheries, Government of Kerala in this regard. No proposals received by this Department for permitting year-round integrated paddy fish farming in the traditional Pokkali fields of Kerala. However, based on the representations received from Kerala in August, 2025, a team of experts from the Department of Fisheries, Government of India, ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), ICAR-Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA), and the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) have conducted field visits to study the challenges being faced by the paddy farmers and potential integration of aquaculture in the rice fields of Kuttanad Agroecosystem. The Department of Fisheries, GoI is implementing Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) in all States and Union Territories including Kerala. Under the PMMSY assistance is provided towards various fisheries related activities including input support towards integrated fish farming (paddy cum fish cultivation, livestock cum fish, etc.). During last six years, Department has approved fisheries developmental proposal submitted by Government of Kerala worth Rs. 1418.51 crore for development of various fisheries activities in the State.
