



Fisheries Fortnightly Friday (F3) Webinar No: 2 *“Startups in Fisheries”*



29-08-2025



11 A.M - 12.30 P.M IST



MANAGE Fisheries Innovation and Startup Hub (MANAGE - FISHub)

(A National Fisheries Incubation Centre Supported by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Govt. of India)

National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE)

(An Autonomous Organization of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India)

Rajendranagar, Hyderabad – 500 030, Telangana, India

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About the Webinar



The MANAGE- FISHub F3 Webinars, introduced in August 2025 by the MANAGE – Fisheries Innovation and Startup Hub (MANAGE- FISHub), Hyderabad, mark a pioneering step in digital learning for fisheries entrepreneurship. Designed as a vibrant knowledge-sharing arena, the series empowers aspiring aquapreneurs with expert insights, inspiring success stories, and actionable strategies to navigate entrepreneurial hurdles. Beyond sparking collaboration among fisheries stakeholders, it ensures that cutting-edge updates and sustainable aquaculture practices reach learners everywhere, creating a dynamic platform where innovation and opportunity in the fisheries sector truly flourish.

Inaugural Session

The second webinar of the MANAGE Fisheries Fortnightly Friday (F3) Webinar Series, organized under the MANAGE Fisheries Innovation and Startup Hub (FISHub), focused on the theme “Startups in Fisheries.”

The session began with a warm welcome address by Dr. Rahalya, MANAGE Fellow, who introduced the guest speaker Mr. Sagar Mehra, Joint Secretary (Inland Fisheries), Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India. She outlined the objectives of the webinar and highlighted the significance of innovation-driven entrepreneurship in transforming India’s fisheries and aquaculture sector.



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Guest of Honor

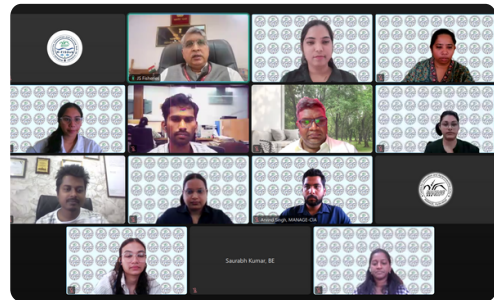


Shri Sagar Mehra
Joint Secretary (Inland Fisheries)
Department of Fisheries
Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying
Government of India

Shri Sagar Mehra is the key architect of flagship initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and the National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP), which have registered over 23 lakh participants and ensured 36% women beneficiary coverage. He has extensive experience in designing and implementing sectoral programs, spearheading fishers' welfare schemes, and promoting digital transformation, market access, and sustainable practices in aquaculture and fisheries.

Highlights of the Session

- The address focused on outlining government support for fisheries startups and gathering feedback for the upcoming Phase II of PMMSY. He highlighted that India is the world's third-largest startup ecosystem.
- The Department of Fisheries supports innovation through multiple initiatives and financial mechanisms. Startups can access up to ₹1.3 crore under entrepreneurship models, while the Fisheries Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) offers concessional finance with a 3% interest subvention for infrastructure and innovation projects.
- For traceability initiatives, startups collaborating with state governments can secure grants ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹10 crore and The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) facility has been extended to all fishers and fish farmers, with limits enhanced up to ₹5 lakh.
- The National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP) provides every stakeholder, from farmers to exporters, with a digital work-based identity linked to banks for credit access.
- The department also promotes incubation and innovation through initiatives like the Fisheries Grand Challenge and designated fisheries incubation centres. Additional support is provided for seaweed cultivation, equipment subsidies, and seed bank establishment.
- A key highlight of the session was Shri Mehra's call for active startup participation in shaping PMMSY Phase II by suggesting actionable components for improved handholding and support.



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Speaker 1



Mr. Murugan Chidhambaram
Head of Digital Transformation
AquaConnect

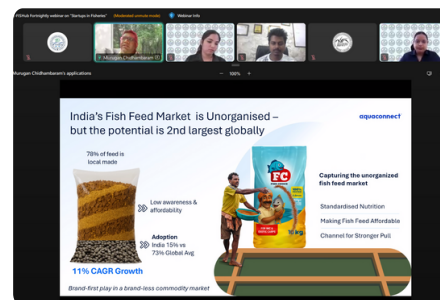
✉ info@aquacconnect.blue

Mr. Murugan Chidhambaram, the Chief Technology Officer at Aquaconnect, leads the company's technology vision and strategy, driving innovation to enable data-driven growth in aquaculture. With over two decades of experience at organizations such as Prodapt, IBM, Vodafone, and Aircel, and advanced training from IIM, he brings a strong blend of technological expertise and business acumen. His leadership focuses on building scalable digital solutions that enhance productivity, profitability, and sustainability across the aquaculture value chain.

Highlights of the Session

"What I am seeing as actual challenges are understanding the problem and adoption towards the solution"

- Aqua Connect was established in 2017, focusing on technology and ecosystem development to transform the aquaculture sector.
- The initial inspiration for the company came from a chance encounter between the founder (an IT professional) and an aquaculture farmer during a train journey.
- After initially providing holistic farm advisory and attempting an Amazon-like marketplace model for inputs, the company realized this approach was not scalable.
- Later, they successfully pivoted to a scalable community model involving local village-level entrepreneurs, referred to as "aqua partners," who handle local dynamics. This strategy involves staff visiting farms and collecting data in a digital mode, supplementing this with information from remote imaging satellites.
- The hybrid data, combining ground intelligence and satellite sensing, is fed into an AI model for analysis, which helps to forecast input demand, so retailers can manage their stock efficiently and predict best harvest times.
- They also offer an end-to-end traceability in the seafood trade sector for their "Story of Shrimp" brand, allowing consumers to trace the product using QR codes that detail the production process.



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Speaker 2



Razaquil Islam
CEO, Aqua Blue Global Pvt. Ltd
 ✉ aquabluegroupindia@gmail.com

Razaquil Islam, Director of Aqua Blue Global Pvt. Ltd is a pioneering startup based in Northeast India. Its core vision is to operate as a full-tech aquaculture marketplace, designed to provide 360-degree solutions for all types of fish farmers while assuring the best market outcomes possible. The startup's mission is to empower fish farmers, boost their incomes, and ensure that every fish harvested has a story of resilience behind it.



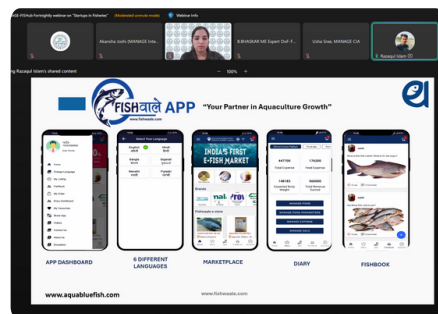
Highlights of the Session

"This is India's chance to lead the blue revolution that uplifts millions."

- The session highlighted that fish farmers face significant problems, including a fragmented supply chain, over-reliance on middlemen, and a critical lack of real-time price data.



- He emphasized that farmers often lose control of their harvest and may be exposed to fraudulent activities when procuring essential inputs like fish seed. To counter fragmentation, Aqua Blue created an integrated ecosystem that links Aqua Mart (for inputs) and Aqua Base (for output transparency), underpinned by the Fishwaale App.



- He also discussed about Aqua Mart functions as a physical store, eliminating three or four layers of commissions by connecting farmers directly to the producers of feed and medicine. Critically, the Aqua Base is established as a physical market hub and live fish facility, featuring aeration-enabled tanks. This allows farmers to safely hold harvested fish for up to three or four days, giving them control to fix their own prices and avoid the fluctuations caused by auction center demands.
- Mr. Razaquil highlighted that the multilingual Fishwaale App serves as the digital backbone, providing a marketplace and a "Fishbook" social corner for farmers to consult experts and peers. The startup emphasized that their technological innovations, such as keyword traceability for inputs and GPS tagging for sourcing, are fundamental because they act as essential bridges of trust between rural farmers and urban consumers.





1. What about the seaweed bank in Andhra Pradesh state and what are the incentives or the encouragement you are giving from the central government for the state of Andhra Pradesh?

Under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), subsidies are available for materials like bamboo rafts and monolines. Support is also available for setting up a seed bank. Concessional finance with an interest subvention of 3% is available through the Fisheries Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) for big investments. A Detailed Project Report (DPR) can be uploaded directly to the FIDF website and approved within 3 to 4 weeks, as the state government has no role in the FIDF process

2. My request is regarding the application process of PMSSY. So in the first phase, it was completely offline. So my sincere request is in the second phase, please make it completely online...

The Department of Fisheries does not invite applications; rather, the state government calls for applications for beneficiary-oriented activities based on its State Action Plan. The department advises all state governments that all processes for beneficiary-oriented activities should be done online.

3. I wanted to start a biofloc tilapia hatchery in Andhra Pradesh. I'm going through a lot of rough runs from pole to pole, the bureaucracy corruption is eating away my time..

The speaker requested that the entrepreneur visit the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) office in Hyderabad and meet the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO will provide the necessary handholding and connect him with the relevant state fisheries department officers.

4. Are there any programs are there for supporting early-stage startups in the ideation stage for fishery startups?

Incubation backing is available from ICAR and NFDB, and expert mentorship is available through five premier fisheries business incubation centers: LIFIC Gurugram, Guwahati Biotech Park, MANAGE Hyderabad, ICAR-CIFE Mumbai, and ICAR-CIFT Kochi.

5. What are the key challenges startups face when implementing a traceability system in small to medium-scale aquaculture operations?

The speaker noted that technology is not a challenge due to modern AI and generative AI. The actual challenges are two-fold: understanding the cracks of the problem and the adoption of the solution. If these two issues are solved, technology ceases to be a hurdle.



7. How do you integrate the test reports, such as antibiotic content or pesticide content, that are required for export?

Mandatory information is collected through the mobile app when the harvest is happening at the pond. If the information is a physical certificate, a photo can be taken and converted into a digital format, which is then stored in their system

8. Most of the post-harvest interventions, like traceability, temperature maintenance, and grading, are around the exports. What can be done to improve it for the Indian customers?

Indian aquaculture companies have developed patented ice slurry systems and advanced post-harvest technologies that preserve seafood quality, extend shelf life, and reduce waste, while the government has also invested in creating 634 ice plants/cold storages and modern post-harvest infrastructure under PMMSY, but adoption remains limited due to traditional supply chain resistance, lack of awareness among small-scale farmers, infrastructure gaps in domestic markets, and the dominance of multi-layered middlemen who control the distribution network.

9. How is this aqua mart going on? Like in which places they have the area like which district in Assam or West Bengal, they have been working?

Aqua Blue is currently working mostly in the Assam part. They also have an outlet in Shillong, and they touch the bordering area of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, as well as the bordering region of West Bengal that touches Assam.

10. How are you collaborating with existing shops, or are you creating New Aquamart shops?

We are transforming the existing shops into Aquamart. While they are open to new ventures, transforming existing shops allows for easier expansion, as the shops already possess a customer base.

11. How can startups effectively manage initial investment and operational costs to ensure profitability in the highly competitive fisheries market?

For initial funding, entrepreneurs must secure resources by convincing parents, borrowing from friends, or taking bank loans. He strongly advised newcomers not to directly enter the fresh fish or fish seed market because these items are highly perishable and prone to losses. They should instead enter the medicine or feed part, which are non-perishable, minimizing early losses. Once established, they can seek grants from accelerators or schemes.



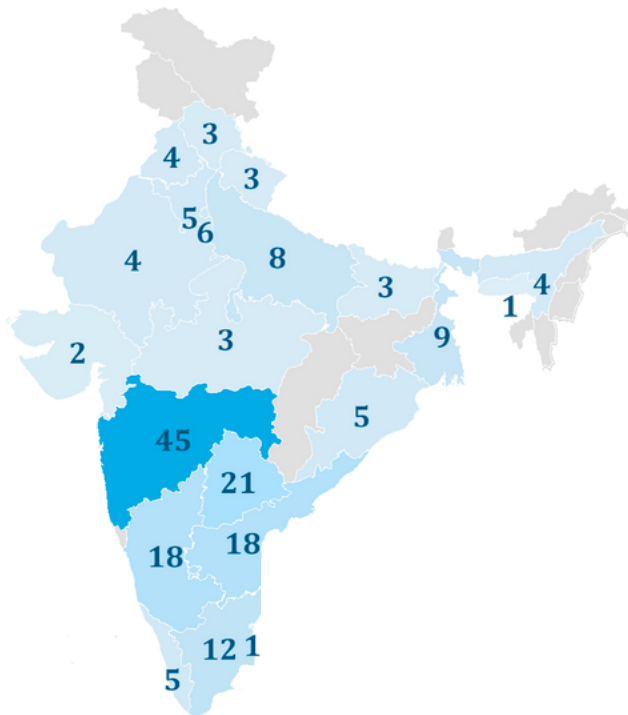
Watch on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/live/4DVFKpBEEedM?si=Jf1XxQBmBaGqxDss>



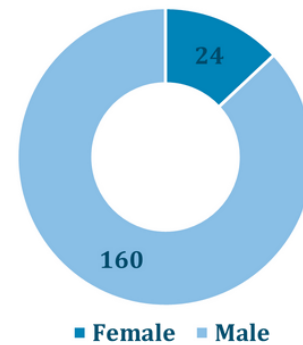
12. What is the customer satisfaction you are providing or plan to address out of the list of problems in aquaculture, and how many of them are you working?

Aqua Blue is currently focusing on the input part (via Aqua Mart) and the output part (via Aqua Base, Fish Mart, and the Fish App). They are not currently working on the IoT, AI, or advanced technological components.

Participants



Total Number of Participants: **184**



■ Female ■ Male

Prepared by

Mr. Selva Clinton T

MANAGE - FISHub Intern

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