

Skill development for entrepreneurship and capacity building through Scientific Aquaculture among SC farmers of Bundelkhand region

Datia, May 2026 : In order to promote entrepreneurship and livelihood security among Scheduled Caste (SC) farmers, ICAR-National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR), Lucknow, in collaboration with KVK Datia, College of Fisheries (CoF) Datia under RLBCAU, and ICRISAT, organized two specialized training programmes under Mission Navshakti, an Scheduled Caste Sub Plan component of ICAR-NBFGR, that received global technical recognition by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for hub and spoke cluster model created for market linkage with collection and distribution centre. The programmes focused on utilizing rejuvenated ponds in the Bundelkhand region through scientific fisheries-based enterprises. A total of 80 SC farmers, including 13 women, were trained in various aspects of scientific freshwater aquaculture, covering pond management, harvesting techniques, and stocking practices. The programmes aimed at building their capacity to transform water bodies into viable income-generating enterprises.

Training at KVK Datia (4–8 May 2026): The first programme was held at Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Datia, from 4th to 8th May 2026. It benefited 30 farmers, including 3 women participants from the Bundelkhand region. Participants received hands-on training in sustainable aquaculture practices. Each farmer was also provided with a basic entrepreneurship toolkit comprising a 100 W Flood Solar Light, sustainable jute bags, caps, and gamcha to support their field activities.

Training at College of Fisheries, Datia (5–6 May 2026): The second programme was conducted at the College of Fisheries, Datia (under RLBCAU) from 5th to 6th May 2026. It trained 50 participants, including 10 women, from four villages of Datia district ; Dhikouli, Kamarari, Banvas, and Sewani. These farmers belong to seven Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Bakebihari, Deobaba, Jaimatari, Ramrajashankar, Jaikaraundima, and Jai Vaishnu Devi SHGs. The training modules emphasized practical knowledge for converting traditional ponds into productive aquaculture units, promoting scientific management, and encouraging agri-entrepreneurship among marginalized communities.

Field visit to Vaishnavatar Producer Company Limited (FPO) farms in Karera, Shivpuri: In continuation of the ongoing training programme, trainees participated in an informative field visit session to the farms of progressive fish farmers associated with Vaishnavatar Producer Company Limited (FPO) in Karera, Shivpuri that is playing a pivotal role in uplifting fish farmers through collective farming, technology adoption, and market linkage initiatives in the region.. The visit spanned farms located across the Datia and Shivpuri districts. During the visit, participants received practical and hands-on knowledge of various modern and sustainable fish farming techniques. Key highlights included demonstrations on Biofloc Technology, Recirculatory Aquaculture Systems (RAS), and fish-cum-poultry integrated farming systems. These advanced methods are helping local farmers achieve higher productivity while promoting resource efficiency and environmental sustainability. The trainees also visited a small fish and poultry feed preparation mill run by the FPO members, where they observed the complete process of quality feed manufacturing tailored to the needs of integrated farming operations. The field visit provided valuable real world insights that complement the theoretical sessions conducted earlier, empowering

participants with actionable skills to adopt modern aquaculture practices in their own ventures.

The programme envisaged to strengthen fisheries-based livelihoods in the water-scarce Bundelkhand region while ensuring inclusive growth for SC farmers and women participants. This initiative is expected to create a replicable model for pond-based aquaculture entrepreneurship, contributing to rural economic development and nutritional security in the region. The programme was coordinated by the ICAR-NBFGR team comprising Dr. Poonam Jayant Singh (Nodal Officer, SCSP), Sh. Ravi Kumar, and Dr. Vikash Sahu, under the able guidance of Dr. Kajal Chakraborty, Director, ICAR-NBFGR, Lucknow. The team from KVK Datia included Dr. Awadhesh Singh and Dr. Yogesh Chandra Rikhari, while the team from College of Fisheries, Datia comprised of Dr. P.K. Pandey, Dr. Neelesh and Dr. Girija Behere.

In Bundelkhand region, ICRISAT has been actively working on the traditional Haveli system for pond rejuvenation and water conservation. Owing to the persistent efforts of ICRISAT, which improved water availability in the region, local farmers developed keen interest in fish farming. The farmers group was coordinated by Dr Ramesh Singh, Cluster Leader ICRISAT Development Center and team comprising Dr Ashok Shulka and Sh Vishal Singh.

This capacity-building initiative is expected to empower SC farmers and women SHGs to successfully undertake fisheries-based enterprises, by scientifically utilizing rejuvenated water bodies in the water-scarce Bundelkhand region thereby enhancing income, ensure nutritional security promoting sustainable use of water resources, and strengthening rural livelihood SC farmers and women self-help groups in Bundelkhand region.

