

**(To be issued in local Language also by respective State/UT Government)**

**Model Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to movement of aquaculture farmers, fish workers; transport and marketing of fish, fish seed, feed and inputs for aquaculture activities; Fishing in larger inland water bodies; Fish Processing plants in COVID-19 Scenario**

Dated –20-04-2020

Reference is invited to Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Order No.40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 read with MHA's Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 and Order dated 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, regarding addition of sub-clause (p) in exception to clause 4 to *inter alia* allow Inland Fisheries and aquaculture industry including cold chain, post harvest and marketing activities during the lockdown period.

In view of the situation arising out of COVID-19 outbreak and implementation of lockdown, it is important that a well-planned and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are adopted by all States/Union Territories (UTs) while allowing Inland fishing and aquaculture activities in light of the above instructions of the MHA.

Accordingly, the following Model SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) may be adopted by the States/UTs with suitable modifications as per local conditions subject to the instructions contained in MHA's Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 and dated 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 to ensure social distancing and undertaking requisite precautions in view of COVID-19.

These SOPs should be implemented through District Administration including District Fisheries Administration and need to be strictly followed by Fish farmers and farm workers/Hatchery operators, and operating hands, Marginal fishers and Fish marketing personnel (Wholesaler/ Retailer) and processing plant workers/ owners. The District Administration including Fisheries Department should coordinate with the local police, Farmer associations, hatchery associations and processors etc.

Relaxations allowed for Inland fishery activities can be withdrawn at any time by the Government in case of non-compliance of SOPs or for such other reasons as may be decided by the Government of India.

The SOPs of Inland Fisheries may consist of 5 parts—

- A. Fish Production Units or Fish farm**
- B. Fish seed Production Centre or Fish / Shrimp Hatchery**
- C. Fish production from Inland Water bodies such as Reservoirs, Wetland, Rivers, Creeks and Estuaries.**
- D. Fish markets (Wholesale and Retail)**
- E. Processing Plants**

### **A. FISH PRODUCTION UNITS OR FISH / SHRIMP FARM**

1. The Fish/shrimp farms registered or licensed by the States/Union Territories (UTs) will be allowed to carry out preparatory and Fish production activities like pond preparation, Seed segregation, Feeding, Water management, Pond management, Sampling, Fish harvesting etc. subject to the compliance of the Guidelines issued by the MHA and the SOPs issued by concerned State/UT Government.
2. For overall coordination and smooth implementation of farm operations during the COVID-19, the States/UTs may constitute a “Committee” headed by District Collector or his representative with relevant district officers including District Fisheries Officers as members. Representatives of local fish/shrimp farming associations and Progressive fish/shrimp farmers may be included in the Committee.
3. The State/UTs Government shall establish a system for proper monitoring of the Fish/shrimp farms and their activities. A ‘Nodal Office’/‘Surveillance Booth’ should be set up and nodal officer(s) be appointed at each Block/ Tehsil for monitoring of the farming activities and to address the related hindrance/problems thereof.
4. The contact number(s) of such Booth/ nodal officer(s) to remain functional at all times (24x 7) and displayed properly in the Block office / Tehsil etc. and made available to fish farmers.
5. The State/UT Government and District Administration in consultation with the local Fish/shrimp farmer Associations/ Bodies shall plan and execute the fishing activities in such a manner, so as to maintain social distance during the farming activities. Further, if any fish farmer / worker/farm hands develop symptoms like cough, headache, body ache, shortness of breath, nasal congestion, runny nose and sore throat etc., he should immediately communicate with the nodal officer(s) of the block/tehsil/district for further action.
6. The owner of the farm shall ensure arrangement of all protective gears to avoid spread of Covid-19 virus (Sanitizer, Soap etc.) for the workers/hands. The workers while entering in the farm should follow the sanitary norms and may change the dress they have used while travelling and should use the disinfected cloths while working inside the farm.

7. Social distancing and proper hygiene practices shall be maintained during the activities such as pond preparation, Feeding, Fish/shrimp sampling, fish/shrimp catching or harvesting. Disinfectant spraying and cleanliness will be carried out at the pond sites/farm and to be continued as a regular practice till situation becomes normal. Visitors shall not be permitted inside the farm till the situation becomes normal.
8. To avoid inconvenience to the farm owners, workers or farm hands, the local Fisheries Department and District Administration shall facilitate the issue of pass/permit for their travel to the farm from their place of residence.
9. The State Government /UT Administration will set up a 'Facilitation Centre' in the Fisheries Department (for overall coordination work in the State/UT) and the details of this Centre to be conveyed to Disaster or Control Room Centre or Helpline Numbers of each district.
10. The team deployed at 'Surveillance Booth' / nodal offices at Block/Tehsil level will monitor the movement of input loaded vehicles, farm implements, inorganic fertilizers etc for farm use so that the farmers or owners do not face any difficulty in procuring the inputs, materials and implements etc.
11. Adequate facilities for Medical Check Up/Screening of fish farmers/workers shall be arranged by the local fishery offices in co-ordination with the Health Department of each District. Medical Screening Team should also make aware the fish farmers / farm hands/ workers about the symptoms related to COVID-19 and preventions (social distancing etc.) along with procedure to be followed related to it.
12. Farm owner/ Farmers shall declare and share the list of the workers/personnel to the nodal fishery officer(s) posted at the Surveillance Booth for maintaining the details in the register. Fisheries Department can devise their own format of recording details.
13. District Administration should also earmark designated vehicles (in consultation with fish farmer Associations) exclusively for supply of farm inputs such as fish/shrimp seed, fish/shrimp feed, diesel, ice etc. and collection and transportation of Fish from the fish /shrimp farms. Disinfection of farm & implements such as nets / equipment for each pond has to be carried out before they are put into use.
14. The Farm owner should procure seed, feed and other farm inputs locally as far as possible, and movement of workers should be preferably limited within the district only, to avoid any possible spread of COVID-19 infection.
15. Fish farmers/ farm workers must provide contact details of their family members/relatives and AAROGYA SETU Mobile App to be downloaded on their phone (if they have compatible mobile device).

16. Fish farmers/workers shall be subjected to thermal scanning at the entrance of farm / monitoring booth and they shall be allowed to enter into the farm after the thermal scanning and disinfection of their hands.
17. The farmers/workers should be advised that no physical contacts or exchanges of items to be made by them with workers of adjacent farms, if any.
18. Proper bio-security measures like crab/dog fencing, bird fencing, tyre-wash/vehicle wash, hand and leg dip should be provided in order to avoid cross contaminations.
19. The fish transport vehicles should enter their proper movement details in the farm movement book and details may also be shared on daily basis with the nodal fishery officer(s).
20. After completion of the work all the farm implements like nets, check trays, feeding buckets, scoop nets, water sampling bottles etc should be disinfected properly and sundried.
21. The State/UT Fisheries Department/ Administration should ensure that the input shops like feed go-downs other farm inputs are kept open so that the Farmers or Farm owners don't face any difficulty in procuring the items for farm operations.

## **B. FISH SEED PRODUCTION UNITS OR FISH/ SHRIMP HATCHERY**

1. The Fish / Shrimp hatchery registered or licensed by the States/Union Territories (UTs) will be allowed to carry out seed production activities, harvesting, packing and selling of the seed subject to the compliance of the Guidelines issued by the MHA and the SOPs issued by concerned State/UT Government.
2. For overall coordination, and smooth implementation of hatchery operations during the COVID-19, the States/UTs may constitute a "Committee" headed by District Collector or his representative with relevant district officers including District Fisheries Officers as members. Representatives of local fish/shrimp hatchery associations and Progressive fish/shrimp hatchery operators may be included in the Committee.
3. The State/UT Government and District Administration in consultation with the local Fish/shrimp hatchery operators Associations/ Bodies shall plan and execute the seed production activities in such a manner, so as to maintain proper monitoring and social distancing.
4. The owner of the hatchery shall ensure arrangement of all protective gears to avoid spread of Covid-19 virus (Sanitizer, Soap etc.) for the workers/hands. The worker while entering in the farm should ensure following necessary sanitary norms and change the dress they have used while travelling and should use the disinfected cloths while working inside the hatchery. If possible, every section worker should be kept in respective sections till the situation of COVID-19 improves.

5. Disinfectant spraying and cleanliness will be carried out at the hatchery before and after every cycle on regular basis. The SPF brood-stocks movement should also follow the CAA guidelines as in force. The seed once shown to the buyer should not be taken back to hatchery. Disinfection of Hatchery and related implements such as buckets, bins, nets / equipment for each tank has to be carried out before they are put into use. No visitors shall be permitted inside the hatchery till the situation becomes normal.
6. The hatchery owner should procure seed, feed and other hatchery inputs locally as far as possible and movement of worker should be preferably limited within the district only. All the operators/workers shall be subjected to thermal scanning at the entrance of hatchery /monitoring booth and they shall be allowed to enter into the hatchery after the scanning.
7. Subject to clearance from the health department, permission will be granted to the seed transport vehicles from the hatchery to the destination. The District Fishery Officer/ local administration should ensure that the live seed vehicle should not be detained enroute. The details of seed movement alongwith vehicle and staff should be maintained.
8. After completion of one cycle all the hatchery complex and the implements should be disinfected and dried.

### **C. INLAND WATER BODIES SUCH AS RESERVOIRS, WETLAND, RIVERS, CREEKS AND ESTUARIES**

1. The fish harvesting from large water bodies (viz. reservoir, floodplain wetlands, Lakes, and Lagoons), rivers, creeks and estuaries can be carried out by using smaller country crafts, coracles with minimum number of fishers and by using cast nets, gill nets, shoot nets or by hook and lines only.
2. As far as possible, the community fishing should be put on hold and only marginal fishers should be allowed to fish from the larger water bodies till the situation improves to normal. The boat and fishers will be allowed to carry out fishing have to return to the designated fish landing site only. They should not be allowed to land their fish at different landing centres of the lakes or reservoirs.
3. The fishers should be advised that no physical contacts or exchanges of items to be made between fishing crafts or coracles while fishing. The boat owners/fishers should adhere to the guidelines issued by MoHFW, GoI to maintain social distance and also to maintain appropriate distance between the fishing crafts, coracles or logs.
4. In case any fisher is reported sick and develop any symptoms like coughing, headache, fever, body ache, shortness of breath, nasal congestion, runny nose, and sore throat etc. while fishing in large water bodies, the fishing activity should be abandoned and the fishing crafts should return

back to the designated landing site immediately. They should also not consume or touch their catch while returning from fishing. Such catch must be disposed of as per advise of health department and it must not be transferred from one fishing craft to others.

5. The fishers should maintain social distance while on board, take all sanitary precautions and avoid contact with the fishers having symptoms. In no case they should come in contact with that symptomatic person.
6. The smaller crafts, coracles or logs used for fishing in these water bodies along with nets should be disinfected before every fishing activity.
7. The fishers should be screened at shore on daily basis as far as possible as they are exposed to adverse environments. The fishers should be advised to minimize the handling of catch onboard as well as at landing centre till the fishes are disposed off to the aggregator or trader.

## **D. FISH/SHRIMP MARKETS (WHOLESALE OR RETAIL)**

1. Social distancing should be maintained in the fish/shrimp markets and cold storages. Dealers or workers of fish/shrimp collection sites/markets should adhere to preventive guidelines and social distancing as prescribed by MoHFW, GoI.
2. All fish collection centers/markets (Whole sale or retail) are to be sanitized on daily basis as per the advice of the Health Authorities.
3. Fish/shrimp landings shall be transported to the nearby markets, stalls, shops etc. through the sanitized vehicles for which necessary passes/permission shall be issued by district authorities.
4. The auctioning/selling of fish/shrimp may be carried out at the designated sites/areas as decided by the district authorities in consultation with the Fisheries Department /stakeholders and drawing of circles/line shall be made at appropriate distances, so as to maintain social distance among the bidders and sellers. The retail vending of fish shall not be permitted at the fish landing centers/points/fish farms to avoid overcrowding.
5. Suitable arrangements may be made by the district administration in consultation with Fisheries Department, Fishermen Cooperative Society/Associations/bulk purchasers to sell the fish consumed by the locals in such a manner so that to maintain social distancing and hygienic conditions. In the case of door to door delivery of fish, appropriate steps may be taken for maintaining social distancing.
6. As far as possible minimum handling of fish/shrimp has to be carried out and the persons engaged in catching, marketing, selling of fish should adhere proper sanitation/hygienic

methods as prescribed from time to time by the local food safety department. The fish storage boxes, balance or the buckets or other handling implements should be thoroughly sanitized after every use.

7. The fish vendors / retailer should restrict their movement from one area to other distant areas so as to avoid contamination and unhygienic conditions. The retail shops fish sale platform should be disinfected with Sodium Hypochlorite solution on daily basis.

## **E. PROCESSING PLANTS**

1. Social distancing should be maintained in the processing plants while processing the fish/shrimp. The workers should also adhere to preventive guidelines and social distancing as prescribed by MoHFW, GoI.
2. All collection trays or vehicle to be sanitized on daily basis as per the advice of the Health Authorities.
3. The designated transport vehicles should be given permission by the Distt. Fishery Deptt./ District Administration.
4. The Processing Plants should also follow the prescribed standard guidelines on food safety.
5. Suitable arrangements may be made by the district administration in consultation with Fisheries Department, MPEDA to facilitate exports of the processed product.
6. As far as possible minimum handling of fish/shrimp has to be carried out and the persons engaged in catching, marketing, selling of fish should adhere proper sanitation methods as prescribed from time to time by the food safety department.
7. The processing activities have to be planned and executed in such a manner that if any worker develops symptoms like cough, headache, body ache, shortness of breath, nasal congestion, runny nose and sore throat etc., should not be allowed to the plant at any cost. On daily basis, the workers should be checked or screened thoroughly before they enter the plant.
8. The plant workers or supervisors should restrict their movement from plant area to other areas so as to avoid contamination and unhygienic conditions. The processing plant should be disinfected regularly with Sodium Hypochlorite solution.

**The above list is not exhaustive and the District Administration in consultation with Fisheries Department and stakeholders may include such other appropriate measures to ensure compliance with the advisories issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.**