



# WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies

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## Why in News?

India is in the process of ratifying the [World Trade Organization \(WTO\) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies](#), positioning itself as a strong voice for sustainable fishing practices and the protection of small-scale fishers.

- The move comes amid **global efforts to curb harmful subsidies** that drive overfishing and threaten marine biodiversity.

## What is the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies?

- **About:** The **WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies** is a **binding multilateral agreement**, aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and fair trade in global fisheries.
  - It is the **first WTO agreement focused on ocean governance and protecting marine resources**. The agreement was adopted at [WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference in 2022](#), under the **Geneva Package**; it entered into force in September 2025 after two-thirds of WTO members deposited their acceptance instruments.
- **Key Objectives: Prohibit subsidies that contribute to overfishing, overcapacity, and depletion of fish stocks.**
  - Safeguard the livelihoods of millions dependent on fisheries for nutrition and income.
  - Provide a level playing field by disciplining subsidies that distort competition.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Subsidy Prohibitions:** Prohibits government support for illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, fishing of overfished stocks, and fishing on unregulated high seas.
  - **Transparency Mechanism:** WTO members must notify their subsidies and fishing activities for monitoring.
  - **Implementation Support:** The **WTO Fish Fund** was established to aid developing countries and **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** by providing technical support and funding.
  - **Committee on Fisheries Subsidies:** Provides a forum for regular dialogue, compliance review, and technical assistance.

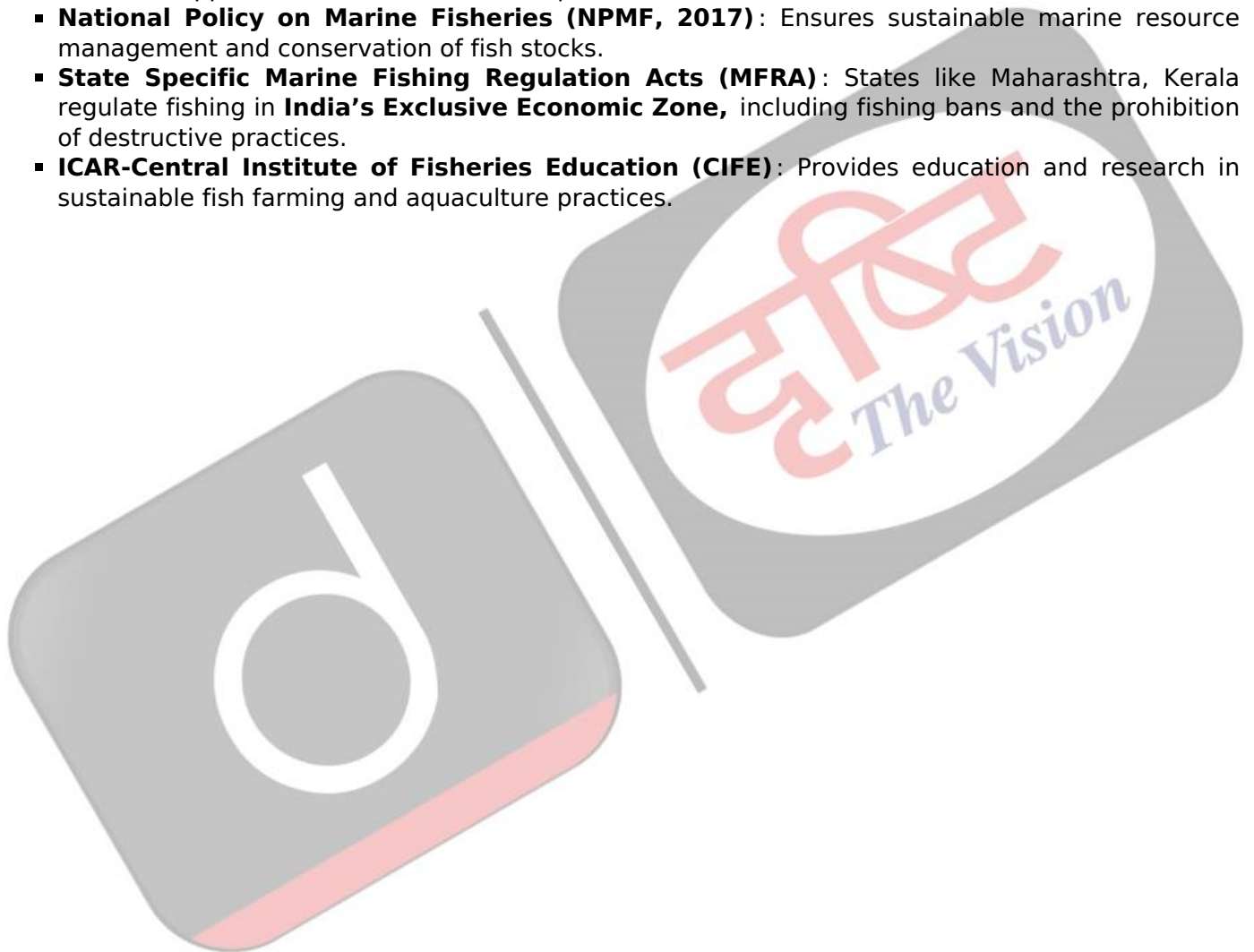
## What is India's Stance on WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies?

- **Protection for Small Fishers:** India seeks **policy space and exemptions** to safeguard livelihoods of small-scale and artisanal fishers. India advocates for **precise and effective Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT)**, including a **25-year transition period** for developing countries and LDCs, compared to 5–7 years proposed by developed nations.
- **Per Capita Subsidy Basis:** India proposes that subsidy disciplines be calculated **per fisher**, not on total subsidy amounts, highlighting the disparity between high subsidies in developed countries (USD 76,000 per fisher) **versus India (USD 35 per fisher)**.

- **Stricter Rules for Historical Subsidisers:** Calls for stricter rules targeting countries that have historically given high subsidies contributing to overfishing, while protecting nations with low-impact fisheries.
- **Sustainability Focus:** Emphasizes that rules should **not penalize nations working toward sustainable fishing** and should support long-term marine conservation.

## What are India's Initiatives and Schemes to Promote Sustainable Fisheries?

- **Blue Revolution Scheme (2015-16):** Focused on increasing fish production and productivity through aquaculture and marine fisheries development.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY, 2020):** [PMMSY](#) aimed at transforming the fisheries sector by enhancing productivity, creating jobs, and promoting sustainable practices.
- **Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF, 2018-19):** Provides financial support for infrastructure development in marine and inland fisheries.
- **National Policy on Marine Fisheries (NPMF, 2017):** Ensures sustainable marine resource management and conservation of fish stocks.
- **State Specific Marine Fishing Regulation Acts (MFRA):** States like Maharashtra, Kerala regulate fishing in **India's Exclusive Economic Zone**, including fishing bans and the prohibition of destructive practices.
- **ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE):** Provides education and research in sustainable fish farming and aquaculture practices.





## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Prelims**

Q. The terms 'Agreement on Agriculture', 'Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures' and 'Peace Clause' appear in the news frequently in the context of the affairs of the (2015)

- (a) Food and Agriculture Organization
- (b) United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change
- (c) World Trade Organization
- (d) United Nations Environment Programme

Ans: (c)

### **Mains:**

Q. WTO is an important international institution where decisions taken affect countries in a profound manner. What is the mandate of WTO and how binding are their decisions? Critically analyse India's stand

on the latest round of talks on Food security. (2014)

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