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# FAO SOFIA 2026: India is the World's Second-Largest Fish Producer

23 June 2026 · ECONOMY · ENVIRONMENT · GS3

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# FAO SOFIA 2026: India is the World's Second-Largest Fish Producer

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## WHY IN NEWS

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) released its flagship report on 16 June 2026 at the 11th Our Ocean Conference in Mombasa, Kenya. The report confirms **India as the world's second-largest producer of aquatic animals** (after China) and the **global leader in inland water catches**, even as worldwide fisheries and aquaculture production touched a record **235 million tonnes** in 2024.

## WHAT IS SOFIA AND THE FAO?

The **State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA)** is FAO's flagship biennial report. First published in 1995, it is the most authoritative global assessment of fish stocks, capture fisheries, aquaculture, trade, consumption and the livelihoods that depend on the sector. SOFIA 2026 is the latest edition, drawing on production data up to 2024.

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** is a specialised agency of the United Nations.

ATTRIBUTE	DETAIL
Founded	16 October 1945 (World Food Day)
Headquarters	Rome, Italy
Mandate ( <a href="https://ujyari.com/vocab/mandate/">https://ujyari.com/vocab/mandate/</a> )	End hunger, improve nutrition, food security and agriculture
Type	UN specialised agency
Flagship fisheries report	SOFIA (biennial)

Other flagship FAO reports include *The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA)*, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)*, and *The State of the World's Forests (SOFO)*.

## INDIA'S STANDING IN SOFIA 2026

India has emerged as a fisheries powerhouse. In 2024, India produced roughly **9 per cent of the world's aquatic animals**, second only to China. The country's dominance in freshwater systems (rivers, lakes, reservoirs and wetlands) is the standout finding.

METRIC	INDIA'S RANK	FIGURE / SHARE
Aquatic animals (total production)	2nd in the world	~9% of global output
Aquaculture (farmed aquatic animals)	2nd in the world	~12% of global farmed output
Inland water capture (catch)	1st in the world	2.2 million tonnes

In inland capture fisheries, India's **2.2 million tonnes** placed it ahead of Bangladesh (about 1.4 million tonnes), making India the single largest harvester of fish from inland waters globally. This reflects the productivity of the Ganga, Brahmaputra and peninsular river systems alongside India's vast reservoir network.

## GLOBAL PRODUCTION: A RECORD YEAR

SOFIA 2026 reports that combined **global fisheries and aquaculture production reached a record 235 million tonnes in 2024**, of which about 195 million tonnes were aquatic animals and the remainder was algae.

### Aquaculture Overtakes Capture Fisheries

The headline structural shift is that **aquaculture (fish farming) has decisively overtaken wild capture** as the primary source of aquatic animals for human food.

- **Aquaculture of aquatic animals topped 100 million tonnes for the first time** in 2024, valued at about USD 371 billion at farm gate.
- **Including algae, total aquaculture reached roughly 141 million tonnes**, valued at around USD 391 billion.
- **Capture (wild-catch) fisheries** held at about 92 million tonnes, staying within the 86-94 million tonne band the world has seen since the late 1980s, signalling that wild stocks are at their natural ceiling.
- About **89 per cent of aquatic animal production goes to direct human consumption**, supplying at least a fifth of the animal protein for 3.1 billion people.

This is a civilisational milestone: for the first time in human history, more of the fish we eat is farmed than caught from the wild. [Ujjiyari Current Affairs · ujjiyari.com · Free Daily Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS](#)

## INDIA'S FISHERIES SCHEMES

India's rise rests on a decade of targeted policy, anchored by the **Blue Revolution** vision and a cluster of flagship schemes.

SCHEME	YEAR / PERIOD	OUTLAY	FOCUS
Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)	Launched 2020 (FY 2020-21 to 2024-25)	Rs 20,050 crore	Holistic ( <a href="https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/holistic/">https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/holistic/</a> ) fisheries development, Blue Revolution, value chain, fishers' welfare
Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana ( <a href="https://ujjiyari.com/schemes/pradhan-mantri-matsya-kisan-samridhi-sah-yojana/">https://ujjiyari.com/schemes/pradhan-mantri-matsya-kisan-samridhi-sah-yojana/</a> ) (PM-MKSSY)	FY 2023-24 to 2026-27	Rs 6,000 crore	Formalisation, digital fisheries, institutional credit, insurance for small operators
Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)	2018-19 onward (extended to 2025-26)	Corpus ~Rs 7,522 crore	Concessional ( <a href="https://ujjiyari.com/terms/concessional/">https://ujjiyari.com/terms/concessional/</a> ) finance for marine and inland fisheries infrastructure
Blue Revolution (Neel Kranti Mission)	Ongoing umbrella vision	Component-based	Integrated, sustainable development ( <a href="https://ujjiyari.com/terms/sustainable-development/">https://ujjiyari.com/terms/sustainable-development/</a> ) of the fisheries sector

**PMMSY** is the largest-ever investment in the sector. Its Rs 20,050 crore comprises a Central share of Rs 9,407 crore, a State share of Rs 4,880 crore and a beneficiary contribution of Rs 5,763 crore, and it aims to plug gaps across the value chain, from production and quality to post-harvest infrastructure, traceability and marketing.

## BLUE ECONOMY SIGNIFICANCE

Fisheries are a core pillar of India's **Blue Economy** (<https://ujjiyari.com/terms/blue-economy/>), the sustainable use of ocean and water resources for growth, livelihoods and ecosystem health.

- **Livelihoods:** The sector supports over 28 million fishers and fish farmers in India and underpins more than 600 million livelihoods globally (FAO).

- **Exports:** India is among the world's largest exporters of marine products, with **frozen shrimp** the leading item; **the United States and China are major destinations**.
- **Nutrition:** Fish is an affordable, high-quality animal protein, central to food and nutritional security.
- **Sunrise sector:** Inland aquaculture, in particular, offers high growth with a relatively small ecological footprint compared to capture fisheries.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND OVERFISHING CONCERNS

SOFIA 2026 pairs record production with a serious warning. The share of marine fish stocks fished within biologically sustainable levels has been declining for decades, and a large fraction of assessed stocks remain **overfished**. For India and the world, the challenges include:

- **Overfishing and stock depletion** in marine waters, where wild catch has plateaued.
- **Climate change**, which is shifting fish distributions, warming and acidifying oceans and threatening coastal communities.
- **Equity and small-scale fishers**, who risk being left behind by industrial-scale aquaculture and trade.
- **Aquaculture's own footprint**, including feed sourcing, disease, antibiotic use and effluent management.

## ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

India's SOFIA 2026 ranking is a vindication of the Blue Revolution model, but the next phase must move from **volume to value and sustainability**:

- **Deepen inland aquaculture** using reservoirs, wetlands and recirculating systems, where India already leads, while protecting native biodiversity from invasive species.
- **Move up the value chain** via traceability, cold-chain and branding so that exports earn more per tonne, reducing dependence on raw frozen shrimp.
- **Climate-proof the sector** through stress-tolerant species, early-warning systems for fishers and mangrove protection along the coast.
- **Empower** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/empower/>) **small-scale fishers** by operationalising PM-MKSSY's formalisation, credit and insurance components, so growth is inclusive.
- **Enforce sustainable harvest** in marine waters through science-based quotas, closed seasons and a crackdown on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The goal is a **sustainable Blue Economy** where India's quantitative leadership is matched by ecological **resilience** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/resilience/>) and fishers' welfare.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

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**Prelims:** FAO (HQ Rome, founded 1945) and its flagship reports (SOFIA, SOFA, SOFI, SOFO); India's rankings in aquatic animals, aquaculture and inland catch; PMMSY, PM-MKSSY, FIDF, Blue Revolution; Blue Economy.

**Mains (GS3 - Economy / Agriculture / Environment):** Fisheries as a sunrise sector and its role in food security, exports and rural livelihoods; sustainability versus production trade-offs; aquaculture overtaking capture fisheries; climate change and ocean resources; the Blue Economy framework.

**GS2 / International Bodies:** FAO as a UN specialised agency and India's engagement with global food and fisheries governance.

## FACTS CORNER

India is the world's 2nd-largest producer of aquatic animals (after China), with ~9% of global output (2024).

India is No. 1 in inland water catches at 2.2 million tonnes, ahead of Bangladesh (~1.4 mt).

India ranks 2nd in aquaculture, contributing ~12% of global farmed aquatic animal output.

Global fisheries and aquaculture production hit a record 235 million tonnes in 2024.

Total aquaculture reached ~141 million tonnes; aquaculture of aquatic animals topped 100 million tonnes for the first time, surpassing capture fisheries.

FAO is a UN specialised agency, HQ in Rome, founded in 1945; SOFIA is its flagship biennial fisheries report.

PMMSY was launched in 2020 with an outlay of Rs 20,050 crore to drive the Blue Revolution.

**Sources:** FAO (<https://www.fao.org>), Department of Fisheries (<https://dof.gov.in>), Down To Earth (<https://www.downtoearth.org.in>)

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