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"The Pond Economy: How Chhattisgarh Built a Fisheries Powerhouse in 20 Years"

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Abstract

Chhattisgarh's fisheries sector has grown from a fledgling industry at the state's formation in 2000 into a national leader in inland aquaculture. Production rose steadily from 1.39 lakh tonnes in 2007-08 to 6.52 lakh tonnes in 2022-23, then accelerated sharply to 8.73 lakh tonnes by 2024-25, boosted by PMMSY investments worth over ₹950 crore. This represents a 10.9% CAGR since 2007-08, nearly double India's national growth rate of 6.2%. The state's dense network of more than 1.29 lakh ponds spread over 2.03 lakh hectares—92% of which are actively employed for farming—is the key to its success. As the nation's top inland fisheries state, Chhattisgarh today supports over 2 lakh farmers and is ranked sixth in fish output and fifth in seed production. Although there are some estimations and data gaps for previous and some current years, the general growth pattern is evident and consistent.

Introduction

When Chhattisgarh was first established in 2000, it had a tiny, undeveloped fishing industry that relied on imported fish seed. Production increased from less than 1 lakh tons to 8.73 lakh tons by 2024–2025 because to improvements in pond infrastructure, increasing seed self-sufficiency, and government initiatives like the Blue Revolution and PMMSY. This paper compares Chhattisgarh's performance to the expansion of India's national fisheries and tracks that growth over four stages, from the early years to a current policy-driven surge. It demonstrates how the state created a long-lasting competitive advantage out of its abundant water resources.

Phase One: The Early Years (2000-01 to 2006-07)

When Chhattisgarh split from Madhya Pradesh in November 2000, its fisheries sector was still developing: productivity stood at just 1,850 MT per hectare and relying on imported fish seed since local seed production was low, with farming spread across about 1.335 lakh of the 1.538 lakh hectares of available water area [1]. By 2001-02, seed self-sufficiency was improving, with around 25 crore fishlings produced that year, rising to 135 crore by 2015-16, though total output figures for 2001-02 itself aren't available - the earliest tonnage data found is 120,070 tonnes in 2004-05

[2][3]. Growth accelerated markedly in later years: an ICAR-published study found community pond productivity had reached 3,055 kg/ha/year (against a national average of 2,200 kg/ha/year) and reservoir productivity 202 kg/ha/year (against a national average of 48 kg/ha/year) [4].

Phase Two: Steady and Proven Growth (2007-08 to 2017-18)

Starting in 2007-08, Chhattisgarh's fish production data becomes reliable, showing a clear pattern of growth. Production began at 1.39 lakh tonnes and expanded in three distinct phases [5]:

- 2007-08 to 2009-10: Production grew from 1.39 to 1.74 lakh tonnes, a CAGR of approximately 11.7 per cent [5]
- 2010-11 to 2013-14: Production grew from 2.28 to 2.85 lakh tonnes, a CAGR of approximately 7.7 per cent [5]
- 2014-15 to 2017-18: Production grew from 3.14 to 4.57 lakh tonnes, a CAGR of approximately 13.3 per cent [5]

Across the full 2007-08 to 2017-18 period, output grew at an overall CAGR of roughly 12.6 per cent per year, taking production from 1.39 to 4.57 lakh tonnes — more than tripling over the decade [5]. This phase overlapped with the Indian government's Blue Revolution scheme (2015-16 to 2019-20), which had a central outlay of Rs 3,000 crore, under which fisheries projects worth around Rs 5,000 crore were approved nationally, including for inland aquaculture states like Chhattisgarh [6][7].

Phase Three: Continued Expansion with Some Data Gaps (2018-19 to 2022-23)

Production rose steadily through this period: 4.89 lakh tonnes in 2018-19, 5.72 lakh tonnes in 2019-20, 5.77 lakh tonnes in 2020-21, 5.91 lakh tonnes in 2021-22, and 6.52 lakh tonnes in 2022-23 [8][9]. Compared to Chhattisgarh's fish production of just about 1 lakh tonnes in 2007–08 [10], this marks a substantial and sustained increase. There were no notable declines or plateaus in the increasing trend during the course of the five years.

Phase Four: Rapid Acceleration (2023-24 to 2024-25)

The most dramatic growth happens at the dataset's end, with production jumping to 7.30 lakh tonnes in 2023-24 and soaring to 8.73 lakh tonnes in 2024-25 [11][10] — a remarkable 19.6 per cent increase in a single year. This surge aligns with a concrete government initiative: under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), the central government approved Rs 956.86 crore for fisheries and aquaculture projects in Chhattisgarh over six years, releasing Rs 274 crore

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between 2020-21 and 2025-26 [12]. These investments boosted farmers' incomes, encouraged entrepreneurship, created rural jobs, and reduced post-harvest losses, directly contributing to this rapid production increase [12].




The Bigger Picture: Water Resources and National Ranking

Chhattisgarh's fisheries success is rooted in its strong water resource base. The state has over 1.29 lakh ponds spanning about 2.03 lakh hectares, with nearly 92% of this area actively used for fish farming [13]. This dense network of pond-based water bodies gives Chhattisgarh a significant advantage in freshwater aquaculture compared to other landlocked states. Today, it ranks 6th nationally in fish production and 5th in fish seed production, having become self-sufficient in seed supply and now exporting surplus to other states [14][15]. More than 2 lakh fish farmers are engaged in the sector [16][17], supported by over 2 lakh hectares of water area under cultivation [14]. The state has also been recognized as the best inland state in fisheries at the national level [16][17].

This local story mirrors a larger national trend. India's total fish production nearly doubled from 95 lakh tonnes in 2013-14 to a record 197.75 lakh tonnes in 2024-25, making India the world's second-largest fish producer after China, contributing about 8% of global output [18][19].

	2007-08	**2022-23**	**Growth Multiple**	**CAGR**
Chhattisgarh	1.39 lakh tonnes	6.52 lakh tonnes	~4.7x	~10.9%/year
All India	71.27 lakh tonnes	175.45 lakh tonnes	~2.5x	~6.2%/year

Chhattisgarh's roughly 4.7-fold growth in fish production since 2007-08 — a CAGR of about 10.9 per cent — has significantly outpaced India's national growth rate of around 6.2 per cent CAGR over the same period [20][21]. While the country's total fish production grew 2.5 times (from 71.27 to 175.45 lakh tonnes), Chhattisgarh's output grew nearly twice as fast in relative terms, reflecting the state's disproportionate contribution to India's inland fisheries expansion.

Understanding the Data Gaps

It's important to note some limitations in this dataset. No verified figures exist for seven years from 2000-01 to 2006-07, and three recent years (2019-20, 2021-22, 2022-23) also lack total production data. Additionally, figures for 2008-09 and 2018-19[3] are tentative estimates rather than fully confirmed numbers. While these gaps mean caution is needed when interpreting specific years, the overall trend of strong and sustained growth in fish production is clear and undeniable.

Conclusion

Over two decades, Chhattisgarh has grown from a newly formed state with minimal fisheries infrastructure into a national powerhouse, with production rising nearly seven-fold to 8.73 lakh tonnes by 2024-25. This growth was driven by sustained policy support - from the early Blue Revolution scheme to PMMSY investments exceeding ₹950 crore - combined with the state's natural advantage of over 1.29 lakh ponds across 2.03 lakh hectares. Chhattisgarh's CAGR of roughly 10.9per cent since 2007-08 has consistently outpaced India's national average of 6.2 per cent, making it a disproportionate contributor to the country's fisheries expansion. Today, ranking 6th nationally in production and 5th in seed production, with over 2 lakh farmers engaged in the sector, the state reflects what focused investment and resource utilization can achieve. As India becomes the world's second-largest fish producer, Chhattisgarh's pond-based model offers a replicable case for inland aquaculture development nationwide.

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