

How Bangladesh Could Be Psyched Up for Seafood Revolution

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A new year with new hope! Bangladesh will finally start trial tuna fishing from the Bay in February this year. The extension of Bangladesh's tuna-catching pilot project is not just a strategic move to tap into the country's expansive marine resources; it also aligns with the imperative to make seafish, particularly tuna, popular among consumers. Despite possessing a substantial exclusive economic zone of 1.19 lakh square kilometers in the Bay of Bengal, the country has historically explored only a fraction of this potential, limiting its fishing activities to four regions totaling 24,000 square kilometers at a depth of 100 meters.

The pilot project, which commenced in July 2020 and was later extended to June 2025, represents a concerted effort to overcome the challenges that have hindered the popularity of sea fish among consumers. Tuna and related pelagic fish, thriving at depths of 200 meters, have remained elusive due to the absence of surveys and limited extraction from deeper regions. This has resulted in a missed opportunity for domestic investors, even though 19 firms have been granted permission for tuna fishing.

While the pilot project aims to stimulate private sector involvement in tuna fishing, its success is crucial for creating a market demand lacking in recent years. Such types of activities will not only open new avenues in the maritime fishery sector but also address the consumer demand for seafish products, ultimately revitalizing the marine sector and contributing to the growth

of the country's blue economy. Consumers are expected to increasingly embrace sea fish, creating a sustained and lucrative market demand for the products harvested from the depths of the Bay of Bengal.

Truly, promoting initiatives for the sustainable exploration of sea fish holds significant importance. We know that Bangladesh faces persistent challenges related to malnutrition, and sea fish, with its high nutritional value, can play a pivotal role in addressing this issue. By popularizing seafood consumption, especially tuna, the country can improve its population's overall health and well-being, reducing the prevalence of nutritional deficiencies. Alongside the fishing industry is a vital component of livelihoods. Encouraging the consumption of sea fish stimulates demand for local fisheries, creating employment opportunities and supporting the livelihoods of coastal communities. This economic boost enhances food security and contributes to poverty alleviation. Furthermore, diversifying the national diet with seafood helps reduce the strain on land-based protein sources, offering a sustainable solution to the growing demand for protein. In a country prone to climate change impacts, where agricultural practices may face challenges, a reliance on rich marine resources becomes imperative for maintaining food security.

I agree that Bangladesh has immense potential to unlock a seafood symphony from its marine waters. But why do marine fish often get overshadowed by their freshwater cousins despite this abundance? Here, familiarity and affordability play a significant role. Bangladeshis are accustomed to the flavors of carp and tilapia, and they are often cheaper than their marine counterparts.

But let's not underestimate the power of taste! Thailand's successful campaigns in educating its population about marine fish's versatility and health benefits led to a significant consumption boom. Imagine similar initiatives in Bangladesh, with workshops featuring renowned chefs preparing squid curries or showcasing Pomfret's gentle sweetness in fragrant pan-fries. Partnering with health professionals to highlight the omega-3 goodness of these treasures could further sweeten the deal. Freshness is another crucial factor. In Japan, the sushi masters are experts in keeping seafood pristine. By adopting their innovative packaging and temperature-controlled transport methods, Bangladesh can ensure fresh-off-the-boat quality even in inland locations. This builds consumer confidence and opens up markets beyond coastal hubs. Branding can also play a transformative role.

Norway's salmon isn't just a fish; it's a health and lifestyle statement. Similar branding magic can work wonders for Bangladeshi marine stars. Imagine "Tuna, the King of the Bay" or "Pomfret, the Delicate Delight." By weaving compelling narratives around these species, Bangladesh can transform them from niche options to coveted dinner choices. Aquaculture can be another ace up Bangladesh's sleeve. Like Vietnam, lush shrimp farms dot Bangladesh's coastline, providing local delicacies and export revenue. Bangladesh can cultivate a sustainable seafood harvest and empower coastal communities by supporting farmers with best practices and technology. Even look at the market system! Like Mumbai, India's bustling fish markets flawlessly connect fishermen with buyers. Replicating such systems in Bangladesh can bridge the gap between supply and demand, ensuring fishermen get fair prices and consumers easy access to fresh catches. Product diversification can further unlock the potential of this bounty.

Filipinos have mastered turning marine bounty into diverse, high-demand products, from canned sardines to ready-to-eat meals. Imagine Bangladeshi tuna patties gracing supermarket shelves or Hilsa waste becoming a popular street food. This caters to varied tastes and creates additional income streams for the industry. Sustainability must be at the heart of it all. Costa Ricas dedication to marine conservation shows that economic prosperity and environmental responsibility can go hand-in-hand. Bangladesh can follow suit by enacting and enforcing policies that protect marine habitats. Imagine sustainably farmed Barramundi or Hilsa fishing grounds with strict quotas and responsible practices. This ensures long-term bounty for both the industry and the ocean.

By weaving these strategies together, Bangladesh can transform its marine fisheries sector from a hidden gem to a shining economic and culinary star. Its time to sail beyond the familiar and discover the delicious, nutritious, and sustainable world of marine fish. So, lets grab our forks, raise our glasses to the Bay of Bengal, and say, "Cheers to a seafood revolution!"

Remember, this is just the beginning of the journey. With unwavering commitment and a dash of culinary creativity, Bangladesh can write its epic seafood saga, one delicious bite at a time.

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