

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sustaining fisheries in India and Australia in the face of a changing climate

Australian and Indian scientists, sociologists and economists will create a strategic plan to ensure marine fisheries in both countries remain sustainable while facing climate change.

Delegations from both countries are meeting in Hobart this week for the first of two workshops to determine research priorities for the future.

Organisers Associate Professor Stewart Frusher of the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) and Prof Syda Rao from the Central Marine Fisheries Institute (CMFRI) in India have invited participation from a range of disciplines to address cultural, scientific, economic and policy aspects of climate change on marine systems and determine how society can adapt to these changes. These discussions will lead to the creation of a strategic plan for research collaboration.

“We’re trying to understand the key priorities in both countries, especially areas that we have in common. It’s a good opportunity to learn from each other,” Assoc Prof Frusher said.

“We’re trying to cover all components in a truly interdisciplinary approach.”

Marine systems, particularly those related to fishing, aquaculture and tourism are extremely important in India and Australia for employment and food sources.

In 2000, three million tons of fish were produced in India, an industry which employed six million people, while Australian catch in 2005 was 300,000 tons with employment in the industry estimated at 13,800 people.

While India and Australia have several environmental and cultural differences, there are many similarities which can benefit from research collaboration. Both countries have long north-south coastlines, meaning the shift of marine life towards the poles can be monitored and compared, more easily than in most other countries.

Also the southern areas of India and south-eastern Australia are areas warming rapidly in comparison to elsewhere, making them ideal to study.

“We’re expecting to see changes in these areas more than others,” Assoc Prof Frusher said. “They are good natural laboratories.”

Because the project covers subsistence, artisanal and commercial fisheries in the two countries, it has the potential to serve as an example to many countries around the world.

Assoc Prof Frusher said some of the areas to be discussed would include techniques to maintain and hopefully increase the use of the sea to meet the growing demand for seafood. Based on projected global trends in population growth it is estimated that there will be a need for at least 50 per cent more seafood by 2050.

The project, funded by the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund through the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, will involve two workshops; the first will be held all this week in Hobart and another in March in India, the strategic plan will then be submitted to the Australian and Indian Governments.

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