

# **AGRI -BUSINESS INCUBATION AT ICAR-CIFT**

## **PROMOTING INNOVATIONS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN FISHERIES SECTOR THROUGH BUSINESS INCUBATION**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Business incubator is a broad umbrella term referring to any organization that provides physical workspace, management and technical assistance, access to financing and other supporting services to young firms and helps them survive and grow during the startup stage. The Business Incubators acts as catalysts for economic growth by combining the features of technology commercialization, entrepreneurship and business facilitation. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) started the business incubation drive, designed for the Indian agricultural sector to promote agribusiness in 2009, by utilizing the vast research and development facilities and knowledge available with its research institutions. As part of translating the research results arising from the field of fisheries and, ICAR set up a unique Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) Centre at ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin. The ABI Centre helps prospective entrepreneurs, by providing pro-active and value-added support in terms of technical consultancy, infrastructure facility, business support services, expert's guidance and training to develop technology based business enterprises. It provides a platform for the speedy commercialization of the technologies developed by the ICAR Institutes, by creating an interfacing and networking mechanism between R&D institutions, industries and financial institutions. The fisheries technologies available with ICAR includes harvest and post harvest technologies, new and improved aquaculture methods, seed production technologies of finfish and shrimp, cost-effective and nutritious feed formulations for fish farming, test kits / diagnostic methods, ready-to-cook and ready-to-serve value added products, waste minimization/utilization technologies, byproduct utilization, pharmaceutical and biotechnological products, food packaging techniques etc.

### **BUSINESS INCUBATION AT ICAR-CIFT**

The ABI Centre at ICAR-CIFT aims at establishment of Agribusiness enterprises through IPR enabled ICAR technologies. It focuses on finding new ways of doing business in agriculture

and allied fields by providing access to unexplored markets for achieving the objectives of increased productivity, poverty alleviation, nutritional, livelihood and income security. The objectives of the ABI Centre are,

- Commercializing technologies developed by ICAR-ICAR-CIFT
- Helping entrepreneurs to commercialize business ideas utilizing the R&D back up of the institutes
- Providing pilot level production facilities in fisheries to entrepreneurs
- Imparting training for creating prospective entrepreneurs and value added manpower

### **Process of Incubation**

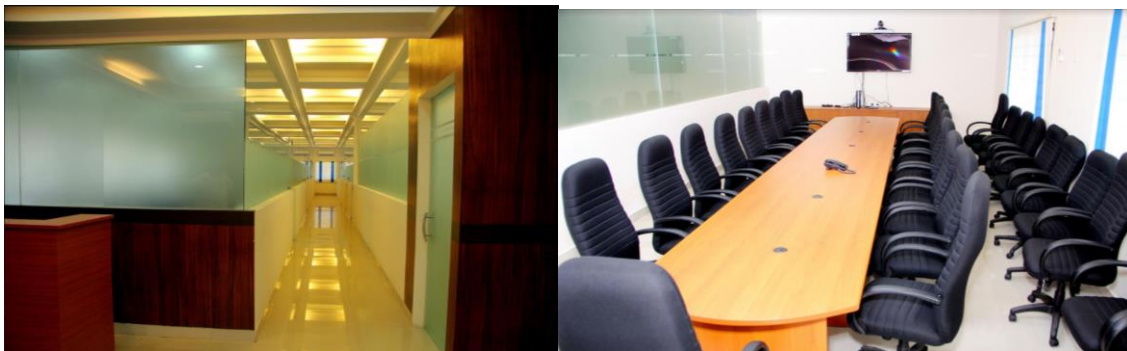
The ABI Centre targets entrepreneurs, from fledgling startups in need of basic small scale processing capacity to sophisticated businesses in need of R&D back up, office infrastructure and pilot/test market processing facility for the development of new products. It possesses good infrastructure facilities suitable for providing direct incubation of about 9 entrepreneurs in a corporate environment within the premises of ICAR-CIFT, at a time. The purpose of direct incubation is to support emerging companies through their infancy. It also provides virtual incubation to budding entrepreneurs who want to start new enterprises as well as to established entrepreneurs who need to increase the efficiency of existing ventures. The Unit regularly conducts awareness and technology promotional programmes for sensitization of entrepreneurs and to identify interested potential candidates for physical and virtual incubation. The residency period for direct incubatees will be normally for one year, extendable by another year in special cases, depending on the progress of incubation. As the business venture becomes mature enough, the concessions and the facilities provided to the incubatee companies will be gradually withdrawn.

### **Incubation facilities under one roof**

The major facilities provided by the business incubator for de-risking are listed below:

- 1) Provides technology and know-how backed up with scientific results
- 2) Initial assessment of product and business
  - Assess the commercial viability of the business plan
  - Benchmark against best practices in the industry
  - Identify technology gaps and requirements

- 3) Regulatory, compliance and standards support
  - Training in quality regulations and related aspects
  - On-site inspections and formulate remedial measures
  - Provides assistance to secure regulatory and standards certifications
- 4) Infrastructure and production unit
  - State-of-the- art pilot level production facility
  - Well-furnished office space at prime business location
- 5) Training and skill development
- 6) Product development and testing
- 7) Formulation of company policies
- 8) Setting up of new facilities and up-scaling



Incubation Office facility for Clients

### **Pilot level production facility in fisheries**

A state-of-the-art generic semi-commercial production facility is made available to incubating entrepreneurs for developing value added products from fish. The ABI Centre provides facilities and staff support on a fee for use basis to assist companies and individuals, with production and testing of product formulations provided by the client. The user can experiment with new equipment and processing steps on old products or to link old equipment in new ways. For incubatees, the pilot plant is an ideal testing arena to determine commercial run viability of new products. The pilot plant also serves as a process lab, a place to see how processing equipment impacts food products under varying conditions. The pilot plant facility at ICAR-CIFT includes production lines for

- pre-processing / cooking

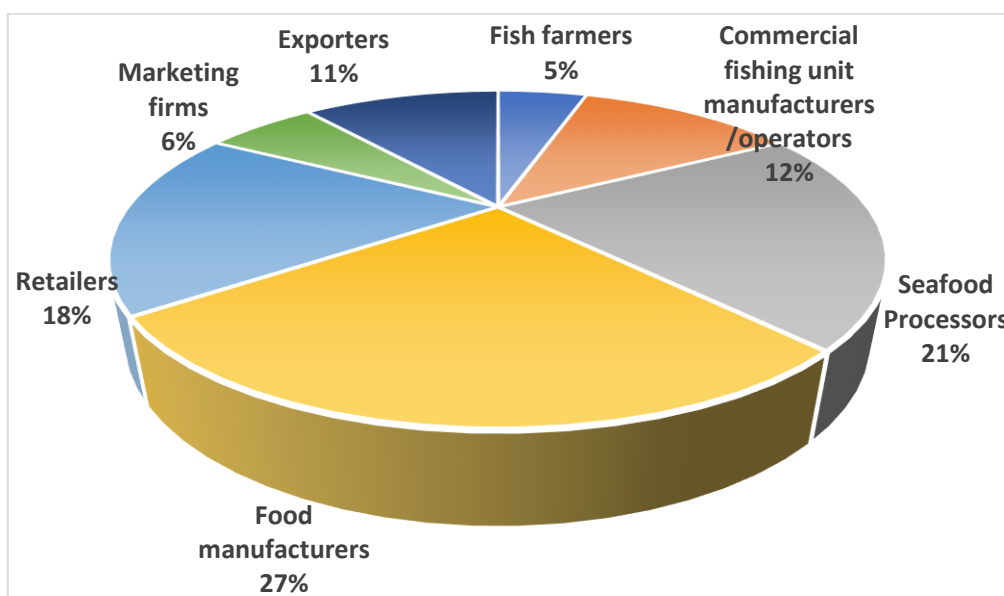
- retort pouch processing
- solar drying
- canning / curing / smoking
- sausage production
- extruded products
- chitin & chitosan
- breading & battering
- product packaging



Plant Plant Facility

### **Categories of entrepreneurs approaching the agri-business incubator**

The fishing industry includes any industry or activity concerned with culturing, harvesting, processing, preserving, storing, transporting, marketing or selling fish or fish products. The commercial activity is aimed at the delivery of fish and other seafood products for human consumption or as input factors in other industrial processes. Directly or indirectly, the livelihood of over 500 million people in developing countries depends on fisheries and aquaculture. The commercial sector of the fishing industry comprises the following chain: (i) Commercial fishing and fish farming which produce the fish (ii) Fish processing which produce the fish products and (iii) Marketing of the fish products. The clients approached the centre during the period 2010-19, for various services are classified based on the area of their expertise and represented as Fig: 1.



**Fig 1: Categories of entrepreneurs incubated at ABI Centre**

### **Activities of ICAR-CIFT Incubation Centre**

- 200+ registered incubatees
- More than 150 successful graduates
- 16 companies had taken the office facility
- More than 175 clients have used the pilot plant facility for product development and trial production
- Around 850 people trained in various technology concepts
- 49 B2B Meets / Industry Meets / Workshops / Sensitization Programs conducted
- Around 62 new product brands in the market

### **CONCLUSION**

The article provides an outline of the initiative taken by ICAR, in establishing the first fisheries business incubator in India. It gives an overview of the activities of the ABI Centre at ICAR-CIFT, Cochin and the wide variety of technical, managerial, and administrative supports offered to the incubating entrepreneurs. The incubation unit is expanding its activities at a rapid

pace and trying to build a foundation for new technology based industries, establish a knowledge-based economy and create new jobs in the agricultural sector by bridging the gap between private and public sectors, and finding suitable mechanisms for ensuring good entrepreneurial climate.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

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