

Guidelines for solid waste management in coastal aquaculture units or activities

The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying issued the 'Guidelines for solid waste management in coastal aquaculture units or activities' ("**Guidelines**") on March 15, 2024. The Guidelines aim to achieve sustainable development of environmentally friendly coastal aquaculture. The Guidelines mandate a systematic approach to waste management, requiring units to evaluate waste generation, segregate solid waste into biodegradable, non-biodegradable, and hazardous categories, and establish appropriate measures for waste transportation, reuse, and recycling. The salient features of the Guidelines are described below.

Salient Features

1. The wastes generated from coastal aquaculture units may be categorised into wastewater and solid waste.
2. The Coastal Aquaculture Authority ("**Authority**") mandates that the wastewater or effluents from coastal aquaculture units should be treated in an effluent treatment system, following the protocol specified by the Authority. The protocol must conform to the prescribed standards for treatment of wastewater discharged from the aquaculture units as specified under the guidelines for regulating coastal aquaculture issued under the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Rules, 2024, or the Pollution Control Board, before it is discharged into open water.
3. The coastal aquaculture units must develop appropriate infrastructure for segregation, collection, storage, transportation processing and disposal of solid or plastic waste either on its own or by engaging agencies or producers in accordance with the rules prescribed under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
4. Coastal aquaculture units are required to identify waste generation areas, area for the storage and treatment of different streams of waste, safe disposal methods and prepare a solid waste management plan for their facility.
5. Every unit is required to enter into an agreement with appropriate or authorised agencies for the collection and disposal of: (a) recyclable non-degradable waste; (b) sludge from effluent treatment system; (c) biodegradable non-recyclable waste; (d) non-degradable non-recyclable waste; and (e) domestic sewage.
6. The facility manager of such unit will be responsible for: (a) planning and ensuring the waste transportation; (b) implementing waste reuse or recycling; and (c) minimising the transportation of waste to the processing or disposal sites.
7. Units are required to segregate waste at source and collect them in bins and are required to ensure that each area has persons on duty to collect, segregate and dispose the waste based on its category, every 12 (twelve) hours. Records are required to be maintained for clearing the waste.

8. Every person, especially those who are assigned for handling, storing, or otherwise managing the waste, are required to be trained on the intended use of the bins which may include an introduction to: (a) basic procedures for waste management; (b) human and environmental risks; and (c) measures of precaution in waste management, etc.
9. Temporary storage of appropriate capacity must be maintained by every coastal aquaculture unit for handling different categories of such wastes.
10. The activities of the waste management system must be evaluated periodically by every coastal aquaculture unit and in case of any non-compliance, it must adopt appropriate methods to ensure compliance. Further, the Authority will evaluate the activities of the waste management system in all the coastal aquaculture units and in case of non-compliance, suitable action will be initiated to ensure compliance.
11. Every agency must maintain a separate record for clearing of waste. The records for the disposal of sludge, sewage and other recyclable and non-recyclable waste must be maintained at every coastal aquaculture unit.

Conclusion

The Guidelines are a step forward towards promoting sustainable development and responsible practices amongst coastal aquaculture units. Through responsible management of water and solid waste, aquaculture units will be able to protect coastal ecosystems, and ensure the long-term viability of aquaculture activities.

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