

Norway to help Lanka monitor fish stocks

Norway says it is committed to helping Sri Lanka put in place data based management of ocean resources, which will enable Sri Lanka to better monitor its fish stocks, National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) said.

Ambassador of Norway to Sri Lanka and Maldives, Thorbjørn Gaustadsæther noted the importance of sharing research findings with other Sri Lankan stakeholders both in the public and in the private sector to make informed decisions related to oceans and fisheries.

He also reiterated the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) on conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources to achieve Sri Lanka's economic growth.

He expressed these views at an event held by the NARA and Institute of Marine Research, Norway (IMR) to launch the main research findings of the survey carried out by the Norwegian

Research Vessel Dr. Fridtjof Nansen in Sri Lanka in 2018.

Norwegian Research Vessel Dr. Fridtjof Nansen successfully completed an ecosystem survey in the coastal waters of Sri Lanka from June 23 to July 16, 2018.

The survey was part of the EAF-Nansen Programme implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in close collaboration with the Institute of Marine Research, Norway and funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

The survey was a result of Sri Lanka - Norway bilateral agreement to provide technical assistance to improve management of the fisheries sector in Sri Lanka and it provided training for Sri Lankan scientists and post survey data analyses.

The aim of the survey last year was to carry out a marine resources survey around Sri Lanka with the expectation that the survey should provide Sri Lanka with

up-to-date data, which will be useful for future management of the country's fisheries resources.

Nina Brandstrup, FAO Representative in Sri Lanka said, "the successful completion of this programme in Sri Lanka is a testament to the longstanding relations between FAO, the Government of Norway and Sri Lanka. The findings of the survey will be an important baseline for FAO in supporting Sri Lanka achieve sustainable management of fisheries resources amidst mounting pressures such as climate change and pollution."

The visit of the RV Dr. Fridtjof Nansen was also an opportunity to highlight the longstanding development cooperation between Sri Lanka and Norway, especially in the field of fisheries, which started in 1971. The Norwegian fisheries cooperation with Sri Lanka includes fisheries management, research and education, and private sector development. From 2013 to 2017, NOK 11.1 million

(approx. 1.3 million USD) has been disbursed for these activities.

P. Harrison, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Economy Affairs, Livestock Development, Irrigation and Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development and Dilip Wedaarachchi, State Minister, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development also highlighted the importance of the resource survey and its findings to take necessary management decisions.

K. D. S. Ruwanchandra, Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Economy Affairs, Livestock Development, Irrigation and Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, representatives of IMR, NARA, National Aquaculture Development Authority of Sri Lanka and a number of other government officials were present at the event.