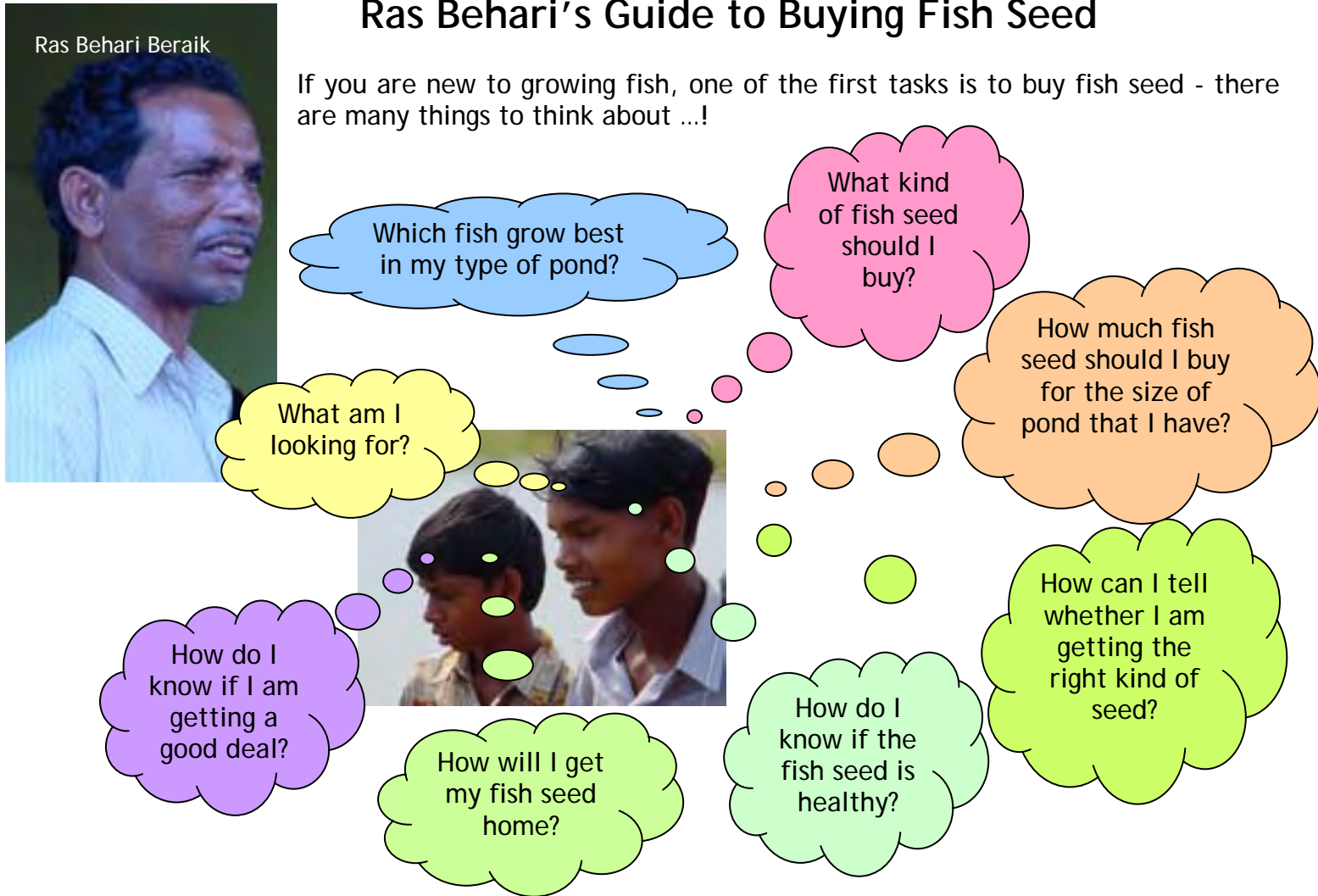


## Ras Behari's Guide to Buying Fish Seed

Ras Behari Beraik

If you are new to growing fish, one of the first tasks is to buy fish seed - there are many things to think about ...!



### Some important tips about buying fish seed

#### *What am I looking for?*

If you have a small water body, a good way to start is by nursing fish seed for 1-2 months to fry or fingerling size to sell to others. So you are looking for a seed trader, or better still, go to a local fish hatchery. Fish seed is a few days old and ready to set out in a safe shallow pond with lots of natural feed.

#### *What kind of fish seed should I buy?*

Most farmers who grow fish in seasonal or perennial ponds, grow three types of Indian Major Carp: *Catla*, *Rohu* and *Mrigal*. These fish eat different foods and live in different parts of the pond. Growing all three fish together makes good use of the pond.

#### *Which fish grow best in my type of pond?*

Every pond is different. Think about your pond and what you want. *Catla* usually stay at the surface of the pond and eat the tiny animals there. *Rohu* usually stay in mid-water and eat the tiny plants and animals there. *Mrigal* stay at the bottom and feed on food which collects there.



Fish seed from a trader

*How much fish seed should I buy for the size of pond that I have?*

It is best to rear spawn in a small, shallow, seasonal pond, known as a nursery pond. A nursery pond is often between 5 and 10 decimals (0.02-0.04 ha in size) and 1 to 1.5 m deep.

Farmers usually stock no more than 50 lakh spawn per ha, so we would stock 1 lakh in a 5 decimal nursery pond.

*How can I tell whether I am getting the right kind of seed?*

Traders usually sell the seed of Indian Major Carps mixed together. However, when buying fish seed it is difficult to tell if all three types of fish are in equal numbers. There is a strong chance that there is less *Catla*, which is often the most popular fish, because it is more difficult to spawn.



## Some ways of identifying the seeds of Indian Major Carp

### Identifying *Catla* seed

*Catla* usually swim at the surface of the water. If you look carefully you might notice that their mouths turn upwards for feeding from the surface.

See Ras Behari's advice below on how to identify *Catla* at the seed stage.

Ras Behari Beraik is an expert fish grower. He has many years of experience buying fish seed. He knows that when most people buy a mix of *Catla*, *Rohu* and *Mrigal* seed for their pond, they don't know how to tell whether there is enough *Catla* seed in the mix.

How can you tell if there is *Catla* seed?

Well, lift the bowl to your ear and listen. A sound like "Chick Chick" will indicate that *Catla* is there.



## Identifying *Rohu* seed

If you put the seed in the bowl of water, they will swim in the column of the bowl and they appear dark in color with a narrow head.

## Identifying *Mrigal* seed

If you put the seed in a bowl of water, they will usually be found to swim at the bottom of the water.

### Some precautions you need to take while buying fish seed

*How do I know if the fish seed is healthy?*

- Look carefully at fish that are behaving differently (sick fish may be a different color, or swim in an unusual way, or may have strange marks on their gills, fins or bodies).
- Look at the skin, inside the gills and inside the body.



The fish seed is **healthy** if:

- the body is uniform and greenish in color
- the gills appear bright red

The fry is **unhealthy** if:

- you see any worm-like or crab-like animals attached to, or moving on the fish
- red spots can be seen in the gills
- the head appears to be bigger than the body
- there is a lot of slime on the fish or red spots or ulcers on the skin



*How will I get my fish seed home?*

When packing and transporting fish seed, try the following:

- Handle the seed carefully and gently
- Condition the seed for several hours when you have collected it, and
- Use clean, good quality water.

## Packing the seed under oxygen pressure

### *How do I know if I am getting a good deal?*

You already know how to check that *Catla* is part of the seed being bought. The next thing is to ensure you are given the correct quantity.

The quantity of seed can be measured in aluminum cups (called *bati*) - in various denominations of 100 ml, 200 ml and 500 ml - with perforations at the bottom to drain out the water.

The average number per *bati* is counted and then multiplied by the number of *bati* added to the water in the bag.

A small quantity (35,000-50,000) of 10-mm seed can be transported for up to 12 hours in a plastic bag whose specifications are 84 cm x 61 cm with a thickness of 0.6 mm. The bag can be filled with about 6 l of well-agitated clean water before the seed is put in.

There are usually around 500 Indian Major Carp spawn/ml so one 100-ml *bati* should be placed in one bag for transport.



The seed are packed in a plastic bag 1/3 filled with water and 2/3 filled with oxygen, tied with string and placed securely in a tin container.

When you are releasing the spawn into the nursery pond, let some pond water slowly mix with the water in the bag. You don't want the water temperature to change too quickly.

Let the spawn wriggle out by itself rather than being dropped into the water.

## Useful Contacts

### Other Better-Practice Guidelines

There are more Better-Practice Guidelines in this series. These include:

- Information Access Surveys
- Self-Help Groups
- Consensus Building Process
- One-stop Aqua Shops

You can get more copies of this and other Better-Practice Guidelines from your STREAM Country Office, from the STREAM Regional Office or from the STREAM Website.

We would like your feedback about these Better-Practice Guidelines. You can let us know by phoning, emailing or writing to the Communications Hub Manager at your STREAM Country Office.

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