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# SAM calls for review of aquaculture industry

**GEORGE TOWN:** Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) has urged the government to review and halt the rapidly developing aquaculture industry as it involved land clearing and conversion that seriously impacted local ecosystems.

SAM president S.M. Mohamed Idris said yesterday an analysis of mangrove areas in Perak conducted by the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia showed a decline of 64% in the extent and distribution of mangrove forests from 1989 to 2009 due to aquaculture development.

"The annual fisheries statistics of 2010 indicate that the total area of brackish water aquaculture ponds is 7,722.82ha compared with 5,623.69ha in 2006," he told a press conference.

He said SAM was concerned with the trend because it involved land clearing and conversion, particularly mangrove forests, to build aquaculture ponds.

He also pointed out there were weaknesses in policies of the

aquaculture industry as there was no specific provisions to regulate the industry.

"There is no legislation to control discharge of wastewater effluents from aquaculture ponds. Thus, even if there is evidence of pollution from the aquaculture ponds, the Environment Department cannot take any action as it is not regulated under the Environmental Quality Act 1974."

He said large-scale aquaculture projects contributed to serious environmental problems as the industry used large amounts of trash fish as feed. Trash fish are small and juvenile fish caught by trawlers.

"The Annual Fisheries Statistics last year indicate that the total landing of trash fish is 21.52% or 307,439 tonnes out of 1,428,881 tonnes of total marine fish landing.

"The high demand of trash fish for the aquaculture industry will encourage the use of trawl nets, which will subsequently destroy the marine ecosystem and deplete fish stock," he said.