

Headline	Review & halt aquaculture industry		
MediaTitle	Daily Express (KK)		
Date	06 May 2012	Color	Black/white
Section	Nation	Circulation	30,557
Page No	L-29	Readership	97,836
Language	English	ArticleSize	139 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 286
Frequency	Daily (EM)	PR Value	RM 859



## Review & halt aquaculture industry

(SAM) urge the Malaysian government to review and halt the rapidly developing aquaculture industry.

The Annual Fisheries Statistics of 2010 indicate that the total area of brackish water aquaculture ponds is 7,722.82 hectares, compared with 5,623.69 hectares in 2006.

An analysis of changes in mangroves area in the district of Manjung, Perak conducted by the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) showed a notable decline of 64pc in the extent and distribution of mangrove forests from 1989 to 2009. Among the cause of this decline is aquaculture development.

SAM is concerned with these trends because it involves land clearing and conversion, particularly mangrove forests to build aquaculture ponds.

These aquaculture projects have serious impact on coastal ecosystems, affecting those who are dependent on the natural environment, especially fishermen.

There are weaknesses in relation to policies on the aquaculture industry where there is no special legal 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 aquaculture ponds, the Department of Environment cannot take any action as it is

not regulated under the Environmental Quality Act 1974.

There is a code for 'Good Aquaculture Practice' but it is not compulsory for aquaculturists to follow as it is not legally binding.

As for the submission of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, it is prescribed only for aquaculture projects involving the clearing of more than 50ha of mangrove forest.

The prescribed limit of 50ha and specifically for clearing of mangroves creates a loophole as most aquaculture projects cover an area below 50ha but still cause damage and there are also productive paddy fields being converted such as for the 1,000-acres shrimp farming project in Kerpan, Kedah.

The authorities also approve aquaculture projects although it conflicts with the National Physical Plan, Structure and Local Plans.

For example, according to the Setiu District Local Plan 2003-2015 the area where the Integrated Shrimp Aquaculture Park (i-SHARP) was developed is an Environmentally Sensitive Area whereby only recreational activities that do not have any adverse impact on the ecosystem are permissible.

This clearly indicates a conflict of land use but the government still approved the 1,000ha aquaculture project

here.

SAM considers the existence and promotion of the Aquaculture Industrial Zone (ZIA) as a threat to natural surroundings because the zone promotes large-scale aquaculture projects that contribute to serious environmental problems.

The use of trash fish in the aquaculture industry also threatens the survival of marine life because these trash fish consist of small, juvenile fish caught by the trawlers.

The Annual Fisheries Statistics for 2010 indicate that total landing of trash fish is 21.52pc or 307,439 tonnes out of 1,428,881 tonnes of total marine fish landing. Trash fish is also the second largest fraction of fish landings by trawlers in 2010, amounting to 35.37pc from 718,168 tonnes.

The high demand of trash fish for the aquaculture industry will encourage the use of trawl nets, which would subsequently destroy the marine ecosystem and deplete fish stock. Thus the use of trash fish for the aquaculture industry should be banned in order to ensure the survival of marine species.

Current methods of modern industrial aquaculture are in serious need of reform. SAM urges the government to review the Aquaculture Industrial Zone for High-Impact Project and stop development of new aquaculture projects.