



25 AUG, 2026

## Study finds microplastics in local seafood

Daily Express (KK), Malaysia



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KOTA KINABALU: A new study by researchers at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has found microplastics in a wide range of seafood and aquaculture species, raising concerns about food safety, marine health and the long-term sustainability of the fisheries sector.

The research, led by Dr Nurzafirah Mazlan (**pic**) of UMS's Borneo Marine



Research Institute, detected tiny plastic particles — formed when larger plastics break down — in fish, shrimp, clams, cockles, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, and other marine organisms commonly eaten by coastal communities.

In one study on the scad fish species (*Decapterus macrosoma*), researchers found an average of 13 microplastic particles in the fish's flesh and 20 in its intestines.

Scad are often used as feed for farmed

fish, prompting questions about whether plastic contamination could enter the aquaculture food chain, the research team said in a statement Monday (Aug 24).

Other tested species, including snapper, white shrimp, blood cockles, and two economically important sea cucumber species, *Holothuria scabra* and *Holothuria* sp., also contained microplastics.

The research study also found that prolonged exposure has real effects.

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# ‘White sea cucumbers exposed to microplastics for 60 days showed stress’

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The study found that white sea cucumbers exposed to microplastics for 60 days showed stress, slower growth and tissue damage, while blood cockles exposed for 21 days experienced impaired growth and a weakened immune system, the team found.

“These findings show that the issue of microplastics in aquaculture is not just about whether farmed animals ingest plastic or not,” Nurzaafirah said

“Continuous exposure can potentially affect the growth, physiology, health, and tissue structure of aquatic animals,” she added.

However, despite their findings, the researchers said their discovery does not mean people should stop eating seafood.

They pointed out that the actual health risk to humans depends on factors such as the type, size, and amount of microplastics, the chemicals attached to them, and how much contaminated seafood a person consumes.

The institute is now calling for stronger action across the entire supply chain, recommending reducing single-use plastics, improving waste management, controlling coastal pollution, and regular monitoring of microplastics in water, sediment, feed, and farmed species.

For aquaculture operators, the researchers called for monitoring water quality and feed sources. Further research, they added, is needed to develop safer and more sustainable farming practices.

“The issue of microplastics is not just about pollution; it is also about ecosystem health, the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture, food safety, and human well-being,” the statement said. – The Star



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### SUMMARIES

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