Set up climate resistant seafood farming systems – UMS VC

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KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Vice Chancellor *Prof Datuk Dr Mohd* Harun Abdullah has urged aquaculture scientists to prepare *to build seafood* farming systems which are resilient to climate change.

"Their efforts could be directed in many ways, including through innovative production modules, identification of resilient species and farming systems with reduced ecological footprint.

"This will help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sustain their income," he said.

Harun said all food producing systems are being challenged by climate change, evident from the facts and figures released at the recently concluded 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Although farmers have managed to survive through innovation, Harun said the adverse effects of climate change required them to adapt their farming systems using new approaches and cost-effective technologies.

"It is about time we give green technology a fair chance.

"Many traditional aquatic farming systems have built-in green perspectives even if the production is not so efficient.

"We need to build on those green-blue systems rooted in environmental conservation while aiming for production efficiency at the same time," he stressed.

He said this in his speech at the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between UMS and Kinki University, Japan to establish the UMS-Kinki University Aquaculture Development Centre here yesterday.

The event was officiated by the Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Higher Education, Datuk Nik Ali bin Mat Yunis, at the fish hatchery in the Borneo Marine Research Institute (BMRI), UMS.

Harun went on to say that scientists were often isolated from mainstream society because of their daily work, making it difficult for them to be clearly aware of the public's needs.

"But I am pleased that this is not the case with the scientists of BMRI.

"They are working with other faculties in UMS as well as with the fish farming communities and international institutions," he noted.

Scientists should also not shy away from public announcements but carefully explain the basis for their conclusions or opinions in stimulating ways, Harun added.

On that note, he suggested for the BMRI to come up with a structured mechanism for scientific clearing house through the mass media to communicate information to the fish farming communities as well as the general society.

"I think this will increase your involvement with the policy makers and the public in implementing solutions or means of adaptations to issues such as climate change - aquaculture links that are both local and global.

"I have no doubt in my mind that the role of science in society and governance has never been more crucial as it is now in the 21st century," Harun said.

On the MoA, Harun said the UMS-Kinki University Aquaculture Development Centre would allow scientists from different disciplines and countries to fully support each other's aims and share knowledge and resources to mutual advantage.

"I must mention that aquaculture is such an area that we cannot afford to remain focused on short-term, small-scale problems in a mono-disciplinary mode.

"We need to approach the problems holistically. A holistic approach also demands that aquaculture science draws on the contributions of other disciplines while not excluding socio-economic perspectives, local knowledge systems and traditional wisdom while advancing its core interests in science and technology," he said.