

Focus on research and devt, aquaculture industry told

Leonard Alaza DE 15.2.2017 3
KOTA KINABALU: The nation's aquaculture industry must focus on research and development in the coming years, said Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau.

He said this is important as aquaculture is being promoted in Malaysia as an important engine of growth and eventually becomes the mainstay of the nation's economy.

"There needs to be high intensity levels of Research & Development on STI as well as apply entirely new problem-solving approaches in managing our marine biore-sources and particularly in aquaculture," he said when officiating the International Conference on Marine Science and Aquaculture, Tuesday.

He stressed that aquaculture is also currently listed amongst 16 Agro-food's Entry Point Projects (EPP) of the National Key Economic Area (NKEA), and that the government aims to double the Agro-food sector's contribution to Gross National Income (GNI) from RM20.2 billion in the year 2010 to RM49.1 billion by 2020, or an increase of RM28.9 billion.

He reminded that with the nation's growing population and increasing preference for fish as a healthy source of protein, the National Agro-food Policy (2011-2020) estimated that the annual demand for fish will increase to 1.93 million tons by the year 2020.

"So, how will Malaysia cope with this increase in demand and how can the demand be met when we would not be able to catch the amount we need? And at the same time, the critical question before us is: how can we continue to meet our national demand in a way that is sustainable over the long term?"

"As you can see, restoration of marine

ecosystem health will take time to improve yield of fish, and therefore for now aquaculture will play increasingly prominent role in seafood security. Compared to fisheries, aquaculture has a shorter history but a more rapid trend of adaptive modifications," he said.

He commended the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) for giving high priority to marine resources in its research and development programmes and for constantly working with State and Federal agencies in the area of marine ecosystem services and seafood security, thus helping the government achieve Sustainable Development Goals identified by the United Nations and ratified by most countries, including Malaysia.

In line with this, he noted that the university's initiative to recognize aquaculture as its niche area has been rewarded by the Ministry of Education by a grant of RM5 million under the Niche Area Research Grant Scheme (NRGS).

"To ensure the aquaculture sector is developed in a sustainable manner and yet able to meet the increase in national demands, it is important to have appropriate and dynamic governance mechanisms, scientific understanding of our marine science and aquaculture and more importantly, how Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) can be applied in this sector," added Madius.

He also noted UMS' success in implementing many research projects funded his ministry on marine resources and is playing an active role in Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) program that includes Federal as well as State government agencies.

"I hope that by binding together especially with my Ministry and the Borneo Marine Research Institute working together, as part of a new sustainable development agenda over the next 15 years, we can ensure that future generations can maintain access to this valuable resource," he said.



Madius (centre) witnessing the exchange of MoU documents between UMS' vice chancellor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah and associate professor Dr Sukree Hajisamae of Prince of Songkla university, Thailand during the event.