

03/08/1997

## Guidelines soon on aquaculture projects

Azura Abas

KUALA TERENGGANU, Sat. - The Agriculture Ministry will draw up guidelines on the setting up and managing aquaculture projects in the sea or in rivers.

Agriculture Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud said today Fisheries Department officers had been instructed to draw up the guidelines yesterday.

This followed the losses suffered by fish farmers at Sungai Nerus who lost about 300,000 caged fish. It is believed that the fish died due to pollution. "The guidelines will protect aquaculture projects from such incidents and provide management tips."

Dr Sulaiman said that in Chile, aquaculture projects were managed well.

For instance, operators would ensure that the fish cages are placed at a safe distance to safeguard the fish from health hazards like diseases and pollution, he said after visiting the Farmers' Day site at Taman Syahbandar.

Dr Sulaiman said the guidelines would be tabled at the Menteri Besar conference.

He has also asked for a full report on the incident at Sungai Nerus.

State Agriculture, Fishery, and Industry Development Committee chairman Datuk Mamat Ghazalee Abdul Rahman said the State Government had also requested a report.

"We do not want to act on speculation or wild guesses that the fish were poisoned without identifying the actual causes," he said.

Nonetheless, he said, full enforcement must be carried out by the local authorities against those polluting the water.

Apart from strict enforcement, the public must be educated on the seriousness of pollution and compliance with the law.

Mamat said if this problem continued, the people would be the ones incurring losses.

Dr Sulaiman also said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would meet 15 officers from the Fisheries and Agriculture Departments as well as officers from the Drainage and Irrigation Department.

The Prime Minister will discuss the high-tech methods used by the Japanese in the packaging of food and other matters related to food production.

Dr Sulaiman proposed that fishermen, farmers and livestock breeders should be exposed to various methods used overseas.

"They should visit foreign countries and observe for themselves the techniques used," he said.

"Through this exposure, they can learn modern techniques to increase production.

"They could also improve economically rather than depending solely on the government subsidies."

(END)