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330,200ha of land for aqua business identified

Eirmalasare Bani

THE Agriculture Ministry has identified a total of 330,200ha of land and water areas throughout the country suitable for aquaculture projects, its minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud yesterday.

Giving the breakdown of the hectarage, Sulaiman said land comprised 105,000ha, coastal area (28,000ha), lakes/dams (90,000ha), sheltered coastline (7,200ha) and open sea (100,000ha).

Fisheries Department's estimates showed that the country is capable of producing 600,000 tonnes of fish worth RM6.5 billion from aquaculture activities by the year 2010.

Dr Sulaiman, speaking at a press conference announcing details of the new Code of Practice for aquaculture projects in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, said the code is a guide for those involved in aquaculture projects including state governments and the private sector.

It is aimed at developing a better planned, controlled and sustainable industry for the country.

These guidelines, however, are not the rules of law.

"These guidelines are made not to make things difficult but rather to simplify procedures," he added. The Code of Practice, among others, identify suitable project sites.

On whether the guidelines can be enforced effectively since it is not under an act of law, Dr Sulaiman said, "the guidelines have been given, therefore it is up to the state governments to ensure that they (guidelines) are followed."

However, the minister said the ministry is drafting some regulations pertaining to the enforcement of the guidelines.

At a meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers recently, the states have agreed to adapt the guidelines, he said.

The ministry is also planning to conduct a workshop with the Food and Agriculture Organisation as well as the non-governmental organisations to get feedback on proper regulations for the aquaculture industry.

The state governments have also agreed to set up aquaculture zones which will be identified as Aquaculture Development Area to avoid conflicts with other development projects.

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