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CATFISH-PROFITABLE

CATFISH A PROFITABLE BUSINESS FOR MD ISA

By: Zabidi Ishar

PASIR MAS, Sept 25 (Bernama) -- When Md Isa Othman started breeding catfish way back in the 1980s, he made do with only RM5,000, but now he sees some RM15,000 a month in gross profit from the harvest of the cat fish.

The 60-year old worked hard to achieve this and believed that "where there is a will there is a way."

And this proverb has changed his life, from a cat fish breeder with one small pond, to one who has 20 catfish ponds and 20 fresh water fish cages at his farm in Kampung Tal Tujuh and Kampung Kubang Badak here.

Each pond contains some 20,000 catfish, with most of the fish larvae obtained from Thailand.

Md Isa is now the main supplier of catfish in Kelantan and markets his produce to wet markets and restaurants but he is not contented with being just a mere player in that state.

He wants to expand outside Kelantan and strives to open up more ponds to cater to demand.

Apart from catfish, Md Isa also breeds other fresh water fish like patin and tilapia and works on getting better catfish species through mixed breeding.

His hard work has paid off and not only in monetary terms as he was also the winner of the Kelantan "Successful Breeder" for three years in 1995, 2001 and this year.

Md Isa said that the award this year was most memorable as it was presented by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Sept 15.

However, he said that his achievements would not be possible without the help of the Kemubu Agriculture Development Authority (KADA) and the Kelantan Fishery Department.

He said that KADA has allowed him to use its irrigation canal at Kampung Kubang Badak to breed fish like patin and talapia in cages.

KADA permitted him to build fish ponds near the canal to breed the catfish by using water from the irrigation canal while officers from the fishery department visited his ponds regularly and provided technical help and fish larvae.

And now catfish breeding has become a kind of family business for Md Isa, who is helped by his wife, Hawa Awang, 62, and their 11 children -- five boys and six girls between 20 to 42 years old.

He is proud that even some of his children who have graduated from local universities, wanted to be involved in his catfish breeding.

"I do not want to force them to assist me but they have said that it was because of catfish that they have succeeded and as such they want to devote themselves to catfish breeding," he said.

He said that it was not difficult to breed catfish, which maturity period was only about three to four months and which preferred muddy water.

KADA's head of development and information, Mokhtar Rajab, said that KADA welcomed farmers who want to breed fresh water fish at its 1,800km irrigation canal in Kelantan.

Farmers could get additional income by breeding fresh fish, apart from padi and other plantations.

He said that before an application was approved, KADA would ensure the suitability of the irrigation canal and cleanliness.

"We are happy that a lot of those farmers who have taken advantage of

this are now living a more comfortable life," he said.

Meanwhile, those who are interested in the cat fish can contact Md Isa at tel nos: 09-7903695, 010-9115145 or 019-9110841. -- BERNAMA

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