

Deep-sea fishing industry needs strong govt, scientist, fishermen cooperation

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By Nor Aznida Alias

KUALA NERUS, Oct 14 -- A strong cooperation between the government, scientists and fishermen is needed to further develop deep-sea fishing industry in the country, says Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) Fishery and Food Sciences Faculty senior lecturer Dr Mohd Fazrul Hisam Abd Aziz.

He said this was because the industry could not be developed without adequate funds, supporting policies, technology and scientific research on the exploration of resources.

Hence, Mohd Fazrul Hisam said it is time for all parties to communicate and work closely together to ensure each problem could be identified and solved.

“Deep-sea fishermen should be given clear understandings on the government’s policies, assisted with adequate funds and latest fishery technology, to maximise their capability and catch.

“They must also be given the chance to learn from successful local and foreign fishermen so as to convince them on the potential of deep-sea fishing that is worth exploring,” he told Bernama recently.

According to Mohd Fazrul Hisam, limited fishery resources, which were decreasing each year due to environmental pollution, destruction of fish habitats and unreported and uncontrolled illegal fishing, were also major obstacles to fishermen in exploring the deep sea.

As such, he said, full commitment from all parties must be mobilised quickly to solve the long, continuous issue.

On Sept 29, Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the potential of deep-sea fishing in the country had yet to be fully utilised and most fishermen were still missing-out in the aspect of technology compared to neighbouring countries such as Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Terengganu Agriculture, Agro-based Industry and Rural Development Committee chairman Dr Azman Ibrahim said his committee has taken various initiatives to enrich fish resources in the state's waters to boost the sector and to help the local fishermen.

Among the initiatives is the sinking of artificial reefs programme at several main fishery areas, involving an allocation of RM500,000 for this year alone.

"According to the Malaysian Department of Statistics, Terengganu's socioeconomic growth for 2019 had increased by 3.3 per cent compared to the previous year, contributed by two sectors which were agriculture and services.

"This showed that our efforts in the recent years had been fruitful and must be continued in the future," he said.

However, to ensure continuous development of the fishery sector, Azman said the federal government must focus on combatting illegal encroachment of foreign fishermen, as well as on deepening river's estuary, as both areas were under its jurisdiction.

He said Terengganu has 80 active deep-sea boat operators, but they were forced to land their catch at outside jetties such as in Tok Bali or Kuantan because of the narrow and shallow estuary of Sungai Terengganu.

"This resulted in the prices of fish brought back here (Terengganu) becoming more expensive due to transportation cost and such. People are complaining because although Terengganu is known as the fishery-based state, fish prices are still expensive and quite burdensome.

"On enforcement, I have always emphasised that the related agencies such as the marine police, Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) and the Marine Department, need to be under one directive so that existing assets can be optimised," he said.

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