

HOT WEATHER PHENOMENON EXPECTED TO IMPACT AQUACULTURE ECOSYSTEM SIGNIFICANTLY - DOF

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PUTRAJAYA, March 31 (Bernama) -- The hot weather phenomenon currently sweeping the country is expected to have a significant impact on the aquaculture ecosystem, according to the Malaysian Fisheries Department (DOF) today.

The department in a statement said the phenomenon has the potential to cause an increase in water temperature, the risk of disease transmission, as well as the threat of harmful algal blooms that could affect the continuity of operations and productivity of the country's fish production.

"Extremely hot and dry weather has a direct impact on water quality.

"Increasing temperatures not only reduce dissolved oxygen content, but also cause stress to livestock, metabolic disorders and increase fish susceptibility to disease," the statement said.

In this regard, aquaculture operators, especially cage and pond fish farmers, are advised to take proactive measures to reduce the risk of losses due to weather changes.

Apart from the temperature factor, operators are also urged to be vigilant against the threat of algal bloom.

"Hot weather tends to encourage the rapid growth of algae that is capable of absorbing oxygen at night, thus posing a high risk of causing mass fish deaths," the statement said.

Based on DOF records, there are 1,714 freshwater cage operators nationwide with the highest density in Pahang involving 1,113 operators, followed by Terengganu (332) and Kelantan (132), which in total recorded a production of 17,744.02 tonnes last year.

Fisheries director-general Datuk Adnan Hussain in the same statement said operators are advised to implement several mitigation measures such as balancing stocking density by releasing smaller quantities of fry and implementing stricter feeding controls to avoid overfeeding which could deteriorate water quality.

In addition, monitoring of water parameters such as temperature and oxygen levels should be carried out regularly to detect early changes that could affect the stock.

"The use of mechanical support such as the installation of waterwheels or additional pumps is also highly encouraged if necessary, to help increase oxygen circulation in cages or ponds during this

extreme weather period," he said.

Adnan said affected operators could file a police report for record purposes and reference applications for assistance under the Aquaculture Support and Delivery System, subject to approval and current allocations from the department.

"DOF will continue to provide technical advisory services to ensure that the country's aquaculture community is able to weather this challenge with a high level of preparedness," he said.

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