

Registration and Licensing Program for Fishing Vessels in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The fisheries management in Malaysia is based on the Fisheries Licensing policy, which stipulates clear guidelines for the management of fishing effort with a limited licensing system. The Fisheries Licensing Policy adopted in 1981 was further reinforced whereby the inshore fisheries program calls for a restructuring of the fisheries through reduction in the number of fishermen. Under the Fisheries Acts, 1985, all fishing vessel and fishing gears must be registered and licensed before they can operate in Malaysian Fisheries water. For control purposes, the licensing programs are formulated to increase the level of income of the coastal fisher folk and at the same time to maintain the optimum level of exploitation of the fisheries resources. There are several programs and strategies employed under the Fisheries Licensing policy that are establishment of fishing zones, determination of total allowable catch and restructuring of the fishery industry.

Keywords: Fisheries Licensing Policy, Fisheries Act, 1985, the optimum level of exploitation of the fisheries resources, fishing zones, total allowable catch

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I. Introduction

1. Malaysia covers a land area of about 332,556 square km comprising two regions, Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia. With the declaration of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the territorial waters of Malaysia covers 160,000 square km and the Exclusive Economic Zone covers over 450,000 square km.

2. As a coastal nation Malaysia has a coastline of 4,800 km comprising mangroves areas mud flats and sandy beaches. There are 13 states in Malaysia – Kedah, Perlis, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Johore, Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Sabah and Sarawak. Each state has a significant number of fishermen in its population. The country's population of 22 million (year 2000) and workforce of 8.2 million includes some 83,952 fishermen operating 32,846 fishing vessels. Most of the fishermen operate traditional gears.

3. Fishing activities are governed by the Fisheries Act of 1985, which stipulates the management of fisheries (both capture fisheries and aquaculture). The fisheries sector in Malaysia plays an important role in providing fish as a source of food and protein. In the year 1999, it contributed about 1.66 % to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP)¹ and provided direct employment to 83,952 fishermen and 21,104 fish culturist. Fish constitute 60 – 70% of the national protein intake and per capita consumption stands at about 49 kgs/annum in the year 2000.

4. Over the years, the industry has succeeded in achieving a steady production from its marine inshore fisheries amounting to an average of 1.1 million tonnes annually. The Department of Fisheries Malaysia, has successfully sustained this production level through continuous efforts in the management of the resources. In 1999, the total production for the fisheries sector amounted to 1,418,829 tonnes valued at RM5 billion (approximately US\$1.3 billion). Statistically, the fisheries sector again recorded an overall increase in both production (4.85%) and value (10.38%), compare to the year 1998.

5. The indication that the fisheries industry is poised to remain an important industry can be reflected by its greater contribution to the GDP. By sector, production from marine capture fisheries contributed 1,248,402 tonnes or 88.0% of the nation's fish production with a value of RM 4.14 billion (approximately US\$1.08 billion). Within this sector, the coastal fisheries remained the major contribution with a production of 1,109,733 tones valued at RM3.74 billion (approximately US\$ 0.98 billion). A total of 32,846 fishing vessels were licensed in 2000, with the majority operating traditional gear (78.3%), such as drift net and trap.

6. With 83,952 fishermen working on licensed fishing vessels in the year of 1999, the population of the marine fisheries workforce increased by 2.95% as compare to 1998. However there was no significant change in the ratio of fishermen working on licensed commercial fishing vessels (42.1%) as against the number of fishermen working on traditional fishing vessels (57.9%).

7. The total marine landings increased by 2.73% from 1,215,206 tonnes in 1998 to 1,248,402 tonnes in 1999. In terms of value, there was an improvement of 8.66% from RM3.81 billion in 1998 to RM4.14 billion in 1999.

8. The bulk of the marine production is accounted for by the inshore fisheries (table 1), which, in 1999, recorded an increase of 2.76% from 1,079,953 tonnes in 1998 to 1,109,733 tonnes contributing 88.9% of the total marine production. Over the last two decades, this sector of the marine fisheries remained the major source of fish landings accounting for over 89% annually. The traditional gears involving 26,972 units of fishing vessels produced only 311,005 tones in 1999.

¹ National GDP of RM 339.42 million (Statistics Handbook, Statistic Department Malaysia, 2001)

II. Fishing Vessels in Malaysia

9. The number of licensed fishing vessels in Malaysia stood at 34,051 units in 1999 as compared 32,846 units in 1998, increasing by only 3.6%. Nevertheless, some of 80% of the registered fishing vessels operate traditional gear including gill nets, drift nets, hook and line, push nets and traps. The current fishing boat structure of licensed vessels in Malaysia can be classified as below :-

Fishing Vessel Type	Number of Vessel
Non Powered Vessels	2,856
Outboard Powered Vessels	12,718
Inboard Powered vessels <10 GRT	8,257
Inboard Powered vessels 10-69.9 GRT	7,827
Inboard Powered vessels > 70 GRT	1,188
Total Vessels	32,846

Note: $GRT = \text{Length of the vessel} \times \text{Breadth of the vessel} \times \text{Depth of the vessel} \times 0.28$

10. The majority of the fishing vessels operate in the coastal areas, which have been exploited at an optimum level. In line with the management policy, new licenses for fishing vessels are only issued for the deep-sea fishing sector, where the potential is more focused in East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak).

11. Malaysia fishermen employ a large variety of fishing gear, ranging from traditional fishing stakes, push nets and barrier nets to the modern gear like trawl nets and purse seines. Marine fisheries can be classified into three categories, namely inshore, offshore and distance water fisheries, based on the mode of fishing operations. Fishermen in Malaysia are classified as traditional fishermen and commercial fishermen.

12. Traditional fishermen are using method of fishing gear such as drift netting, hooks and lines, and traps and etc. They can operate in any fishing zone (A, B, C, and C2). Due to their small size of vessel (usually less than 10 GRT), many of traditional fishermen operate mainly in Zone A.

13. Commercial fishermen, use mainly gear such as trawl net and purse seiner. Their fishing vessels are much bigger and the area of operation are as below :

Fishing Gears	Size of Vessel	Area Operation
Purse Seine & Trawl Net	Less than 40 GRT	Zone B
	40 - 70 GRT	Zone C
	Above 70 GRT	Zone C2

III. Registration and Licensing Program for Fishing Vessels in Malaysia

14. Several Ordinances and Acts were introduced to regulate the fishing industry in Malaysia. The first one was the Fisheries Ordinance of 1909. This ordinance was subsequently amended in 1912, 1924, 1926 and was finally repealed in 1951. The Fisheries Rules of 1951 was enforced on 10 August 1951. During this time, there were also seven Fisheries Ordinance/Enactments enforced by the various states.



15. The fishing industry at that time consisted mainly of traditional fishing and regulation was minimal. The introduction of trawling in the coastal waters in the 1960's created much conflict between traditional fishers and trawl operators. This led to the formulation of the Fisheries Act of 1963 that provided a more comprehensive legal framework to manage fisheries in Malaysia waters. This Act was subsequently repealed and replaced by the Fisheries Act of 1985.

16. The fisheries management in Malaysia is based on the Fisheries Licensing Policy which stipulates clear guidelines for the management of fishing effort via an limited licensing system. Under the Fisheries Act 1985, all fishing vessel and fishing gears must be registered and licensed before they can operate in Malaysian Fisheries Water.

17. For control purposes, licensing programs are formulated to increase the level of income of the coastal fisherfolk and at the same time to maintain the optimum level of exploitation of the fisheries resources. The Fisheries Licensing Policy adopted in 1981 was further reinforced whereby the inshore fisheries program calls for a restructuring of the fisheries through reduction in the number of fishermen.

18. Objectives of the Fisheries Licensing Policy include :

- 1) Maintain fishery resources to achieve optimum yield
- 2) Ensure the maximization of catches and to increase the level of income of the inshore fishermen.
- 3) Eliminate competition and inter-sectoral conflict through allocation of resources
- 4) A more equitable distribution of catches between traditional and commercial fishermen
- 5) Restructuring the ownership pattern of fishing units among various ethnic groups in accordance with the New Economic Policy.

19. Under this policy, several programs and strategies were employed to achieve desired objectives including :

- 1) Establishment of Fishing Zones

The establishment of four fishing zones through a limited licensing scheme whereby zones were designated for specific fishing method, class of vessel and ownership pattern. The establishment of the four fishing zones was the main strategy employed in the allocation of fishing areas. These four zones were :

Zones	Area	Classification
A	From shore up to 5 nm	Reserved solely for small-scale fishers using traditional fishing gear and owner-operated vessels.
B	5 - 12 nm	Reserved for owner-operated commercial fishing vessels of less than 40 GRT using trawl nets and purse seine nets. There is no restriction for zone B operate in Zone C and C2.
C	12 - 30 nm	Commercial fishing vessels of more than 40 GRT using trawl nets and purse seine nets are allowed to operate. Zone C operators can operate in C2, but not otherwise.
C2	30 - EEZ limit or 200 nm	Beyond 30 nm where deep sea fishing vessels of 70 GRT and above are allowed to operate.

2) Determination of Total Allowable Catch

Within each zone, it is further intended to limit the number of vessels permitted to operate so that fishing pressures do not exceed the maximum sustainable yield. In order to conserve inshore fisheries resources of the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, there is currently no issuance of new licenses.

3) Restructuring of The Fishery Industry

The licensing of fishermen will permit effective monitoring to limit entry into the industry. Restructuring through reduction of the number of fishermen will also be carried out on a voluntary basis and by non-renewal of licenses for deceased and/or marginal fishermen. Alternative employment opportunities in aquaculture, food processing, agriculture land scheme, small business enterprises and industrial skills training will be provided.

20. To implement all these programs, the Department of Fisheries, Malaysia has 13 state offices and district office all over the country to oversee and implement all aspects of fisheries management such as, registration and licensing of fishing vessels and fishing gears, collection of fisheries data and statistics and enforcement aspects.

21. In terms of safety measures, the fisheries regulation under the Fisheries Act 1985 states that every fishing vessel should show proof that it has adequate safety equipment such as life jackets before a license is renewed. This requirement is stated under the Fisheries (Licensing of Local Fishing Vessels) Regulation 1985.

22. In Malaysia, fishing vessels are also not allowed to carry passengers or cargo. This is in line with the Fisheries (Maritime) (Licensing of Local Fishing Vessels), Regulation 1985. An individual fisherman is also required to take personal accident insurance. However, vessel insurance is not compulsory for the purpose of annual license renewal.

23. Under the registration and licensing program, all fishing vessels in various state are differentiate into certain code and colors. The registration number must be carved on both sides of the fore part of the hull of the vessel. In the case of the deep sea vessel (more than 70 GRT) the number must also be carved on the top of the wheelhouse. Wheelhouse of the fishing vessel must be painted with color and code specified for the state are as shown below :

State	Code	Wheel House Color
Perlis	PSF	Dark Blue
Kedah	KHF	Dark Red
Pulau Pinang	PPF	Light Blue
Perak	PKF	Dark Yellow
Selangor	SLF	Light Red
Negeri Sembilan	NSF	Dark Green
Melaka	MKF	Purple
Johor	JHF	Blue
Pahang	PAF	Light Yellow
Terengganu	TRF	Light Green
Kelantan	KNF	Dark
Sarawak	SS	
Sabah	SBF	
Labuan	LNF	



IV. Conclusion

24. Under the Fisheries Act of 1985, all fishing vessel and fishing gears must be registered and licensed before they can operate in Malaysian Fisheries Water.

25. The main purpose of The Fisheries Licensing Policy was adopted in 1981 to control number of fishing vessels and to maintain fishery resources in Malaysia.

Table 1. Landings and Values of Marine Inshore Fisheries, 1999

	Landings (Tones)	Value (RM)
West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia	462,171	1,605,512,300
East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia	333,532	1,009,370,824
Peninsular Malaysia	795,703	2,614,883,124
Sabah	200,933	676,858,489
Sarawak	101,130	398,273,946
Federal Territory of Labuan	11,967	47,720,675
Total	1,109,733	3,737,736,234