

SPECIAL FEATURE : Aceh, Indonesia

Malaysian fishery trade mission to Aceh – a grand success

Some business deals were concluded during the recent visit of Malaysian fish traders/importers to Aceh, Indonesia from 16 – 21 April, 2009. In addition to the importation of whole, fresh/ chilled fish, the traders were also interested in buying dried anchovy as well as other agricultural products such as sago for making fish crackers. This activity was jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) project in Aceh and INFOFISH. The seven-member mission comprised of importers from Penang (2), Fishermen's Association of Perak or *Penggerak* (1), Kuala Lumpur Fish Wholesalers Association (1), Fisherwomen's Association of Perak or KUNITA Perak (1) and two officers from the Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM).

The delegates who were accompanied by a consultant from INFOFISH and FAO office in Banda Aceh, conducted business meetings with fish traders, fishermen and processors in various districts in Aceh such as in Langsa, Idi, Lhokseumawe, Meulaboh and the capital Banda Aceh. They also took the opportunity to visit fish landing sites, traditional fish processing units and a grouper farm in those places. The delegates also held private business discussions/meetings with many fish traders from Aceh. The fish traders are small players who export small quantities of fresh/ chilled fish on a daily basis, to Malaysia usually via Belawan port in Medan, North Sumatera province.

The trade visit resulted in *Penggerak* of Perak successfully establishing direct trade links with fish traders in major districts in Aceh such as from Idi and Langsa districts in Eastern Aceh and Meulaboh, Singkil, Tapak Tuan and Labuhan Haji in the western and southern part of the province. More than 40 mt of fish has been imported during the past one month, mainly high value species like grouper of plate size (600 – 900 gm/piece), red snapper and Spanish mackerel. In addition, *Penggerak* also signed a deal with a dried anchovy supplier in Aceh to



Meeting in progress among traders.



Visit to a fish landing site.



Malaysian trade mission with counterparts in Aceh.

import the product into Malaysia where consumption of dried anchovy is among the highest in the region. Investment in an ice plant in Idi fishing port is also seriously being considered by *Penggerak*, as there is a general shortage of ice supply in Aceh to meet the needs of fishermen and fish traders.

Dato' Md Jali Lateh, one of the delegates who regularly imports large quantities of frozen fish from Thailand and Vietnam, also found that Aceh has a lot to offer to meet his company's needs. His company, based in the northern state of Kedah, Malaysia, caters food (including seafood) to its institutional customers such as hospitals, army camps, boarding schools and colleges. He plans to import dried anchovy from Aceh, as the quality and price fulfill his requirements. Apart from anchovy, he is also interested in importing coconut fibre from Aceh for a customer in China.

During the visits, KUNITA and LKIM representatives demonstrated to local fisherwomen and fish processors on how to improve the livelihood of the coastal communities through various economic activities such as processing low value fish species for making fish crackers and other tit-bits. They also demonstrated their handicraft skills with used material such as old newspapers, fish scales *etc.* Products such as fish crackers called *keropak lekor* in Malaysia, and fish floss are well received by the people in Aceh. There is potential to develop such products locally in Aceh using abundant low value pelagic fishes such as sardines as raw materials.

ASIA - a newly formed fish traders association

To develop the fishery sector in Aceh, particularly in trading, fish traders from all over Aceh recently established an association called ASIA (*Asosiasi Saudagar Ikan Aceh*) or the Aceh Fish Traders Association. Almost 200 fish traders in Aceh have registered to be ASIA members. The main objective of ASIA is to help its members in developing their business, particularly in dealing with buyers from Medan and overseas. ASIA is also in discussion with *Penggerak*, to explore the possibility of having direct fish cargo service between Idi in Aceh and Lumut in Perak. Once the direct cargo service is available, the dependency on Belawan port in Medan to export fish can be reduced. 📍