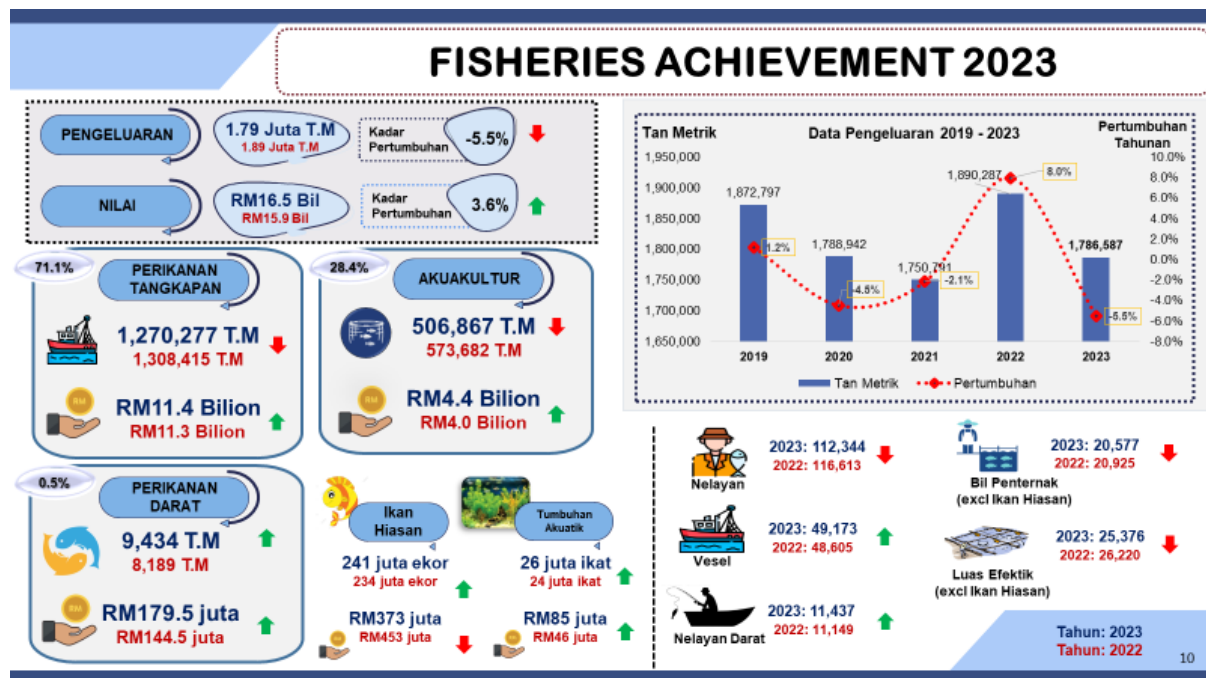# ACHIEVEMENT AND WAY FORWARD OF FISHERIES SUBSECTOR (AGROFOOD)

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES MALAYSIA

The fisheries sector in Malaysia is a major contributor to the national economy, particularly for the agrofood agriculture sector, which supplies the country's protein sources. This sector also provides employment opportunities, generating income for more than 145,596 fishermen and aquaculture operators. It includes both food fisheries, which cover capture fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture, and non-food fisheries, which consist of ornamental fish and aquatic plants. Capture fisheries refer to fish-catching activities in Malaysia's fishing waters, including the open sea, which is the primary source of fish production. This subsector is divided into marine and inland capture fisheries. Inland fisheries encompass activities in rivers, lakes, streams, ponds and other non-sea waters, whether natural or artificial. Aquaculture involves cultivating various fish species in a controlled environment.

In 2023, the performance of the fisheries sector declined by 5.5 per cent, with a total fish landing of 1.79 million metric tonnes (MT) compared to 1.89 million MT in 2022. However, in terms of industry contribution, the fisheries sector saw an increase of 5.1%, rising from RM15.9 billion in 2022 to RM16.5 billion in 2023. In terms of annual growth rate, fish landings in 2023 were among the lowest (-5.5%) since 2019 and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This decline is attributed to reduced catches from both capture fisheries and aquaculture. In 2023, capture fisheries recorded landings of 1.27 million MT compared to 1.31 million MT in 2022, a decrease of 2.9%. Aquaculture production also decreased by 11.6% to 506.9 thousand MT from 573.7 thousand MT in 2022. Meanwhile, inland fisheries recorded an increase from 8,189

MT to 9,442 MT. The number of fishermen, fish farmers and effective areas all decreased in 2023 compared to 2022. However, the number of vessels increased from 48,605 units to 49,173 units in 2023.

The capture fisheries subsector plays a crucial role in ensuring food availability. The government, through the Department of Fisheries Malaysia (DOF), implements policies to ensure the sustainability of fish stocks. However, DOF faces challenges such as overfishing, habitat destruction and illegal fishing activities. These challenges can be addressed through fisheries management plans, marine protected areas and sustainable practices. Inland fisheries have high potential to penetrate both local and international markets due to the presence of high-value river fish species. In this regard, the government has provided technical assistance, training, research support, financing schemes and incentives to promote sustainable development in inland fisheries.

The aquaculture subsector has experienced significant growth and development over the past five years. This subsector has made a substantial contribution to the global fisheries industry, driven by favourable climate and environmental conditions in the country. It offers various species and opportunities for farmers to explore new markets and increase income. The government supports aquaculture activities through policies, incentives, technical support and research, including modern practices, techniques and technologies to improve water quality, production efficiency and fish quality.

The aquaculture subsector is empowered to reduce the country's reliance on fishery resources through capture fisheries. From 2014 to 2019, this subsector contributed between 20% to 26% of fish production compared to 74% to 80% from coastal and deep-sea capture fisheries. Consequently, the government aims to increase fish production from aquaculture activities to 60% to reduce pressure on natural water sources and enhance income for targeted groups through the aquaculture subsector.

The National Agrofood Policy 2021-2030 (NAP 2.0) specifically focuses on enhancing national food security. The implementation of the 2024 Agricultural Census aligns with this policy, supporting the aspirations and direction of the agrofood sector towards greater sustainability, resilience and high technology. This will drive economic growth while prioritizing national food security and nutrition. The 2024 Agricultural Census will categorize the fisheries subsector into three categories: marine capture fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture. This census will provide accurate information about the holistic structure of the fisheries sector, aiding the government in transforming the sector and improving the socio-economic status of fishermen and aquaculture operators. Addressing challenges in data collection, analysis, and interpretation will shape policies and programs supporting the growth and development of the agricultural sector in Malaysia.