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COVID-19 Risks to Malaysian Food Security Assurance

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A novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona-Virus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) has started in Wuhan city, China, and rapidly spread worldwide. In Malaysia, the total confirmed cases currently reached 9,296 cases with a total recovered cases successfully reached almost 9,000. With one of the among highest recovery rate in ASEAN region (with 97%), Malaysia has been recognized as one of the most successful countries in the world in handling and controlling the COVID-19 pandemic, might due to the fact that the cooperation from Malaysian public to adhere to the Standard Operating Procedures, established by the Malaysian Government. Malaysian government has also announced the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO), and six phases of MCO have been implemented and the latest seventh phase of MCO, the Recovery MCO (RMCO) will end on 31st August 2020. Previous four phases of MCO in Malaysia has resulted in the restriction of all public operation to only critical/ essential services such as food supply. It is expected that the COVID-19 pandemic poses important challenges to the Malaysian fisheries and aquaculture sector. In 2018-2019, Malaysian food supply of aquaculture, and capture fisheries sectors as well as inland fisheries have produced 1.85 million metric tons production with the value estimated at RM 14.5 billion with a total number of related workers are more than 150,000 people. However, recent speculation shows that this pandemic severely disrupts market demand and supply chains of Malaysian seafood industries (Waiho et al. 2020). Further measurement of the full impact of COVID-19 on

fisheries and aquaculture activities, from institutional interdisciplinary research at the national and regional level is truly needed in order to improve our healthcare system and environmental security (Edinur & Abdullah, 2020). For example, survey data to shape effective responses to the impacts of COVID-19 on the aquaculture and fisheries sectors are critical if we are to ensure its impacts do not exacerbate the many inequities that already exist in our globalized world. Additionally, the Malaysian governments are rightly focusing on spending millions of Malaysian Ringgit to keep health-care systems functioning, to support companies to prevent more workers losing their jobs and to assist the B40 community which is mostly from the fisheries and aquaculture sector. The recent economic stimulus packages could relieve the impacts of COVID-19, especially to the aquaculture and fisheries industry.

Key Words: Aquaculture; Fisheries; Movement Control Order; SARS-CoV-2; Shellfish

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