

IMPORTATION OF CATTLE TO MALAYSIA: A GROWING INDUSTRY

Introduction

Agriculture plays a vital role in Malaysia's economic development. According to the Annual Economic Statistics (AES) Agriculture Sector, the gross output of the agriculture sector has increased over the years, from RM82.2 billion in 2020 to RM101.3 billion in 2021, which shows a growth rate of 23.2%. [1] Among the RM101.3 billion, RM18.7 billion was contributed by livestock [2]. The statistics indicates that livestock play an essential role in the country's agricultural industry. To prosper the agriculture sector, the importation of animals has become increasingly important in the economy. This article will explore the importation of cattle to Malaysia, including the reasons for importation, the benefits and challenges of importation, and the regulatory framework governing the importation of cattle.

Reasons of Importation

There are many different reasons why Malaysians import cattle to Malaysia. One of the main reasons is to meet the growing demand for beef. As the local production of beef is inadequate to fulfill the demand of the Malaysian market, Malaysia relies on imports to supplement local production [3].

Furthermore, Malaysia heavily relies on imported dairy products, including milk and cheese, due to the limited domestic production of dairy and a relatively low number of dairy cattle in the country [4]. Under the Economic Transformation Program, the government came out with proposals to establish partnerships with foreign-based companies under the two Entry Point Projects, which falls under the Agriculture National Key Economic Areas, which aims to increase milk supply, improve consumer perception of the local dairy sector, ensuring a steady purchaser and a steady supply of dairy animals [5].

Thirdly, the importation of cattle can contribute to the diversification of genetics amongst the cattle. The genetics of local cattle can be improved, as the imported cattle could crossbreed with the local cattle to produce higher-quality offspring [6].

Benefits of Importation

The importation of cattle could bring different benefits to Malaysia, which are:

Firstly, importing cattle could ensure food security in the country. Importing cattle could fulfill the domestic demand for beef and dairy in the country. This ensures food demand of the population and ensures the consumers could have access to steady supply of meat and dairy, and stabilize prices of beef and dairy products.

Secondly, the importation of cattle could bring economic benefits to the country. Such activities could create job opportunities in transportation, logistics, and retail sectors, which could assist in boosting the local economy.

Moreover, businesses in Malaysia could create more business opportunities by exporting dairy products and beef to other countries. This could generate more foreign income for the country and hence, could boost the country's economy.

Challenges of Importation

Despite the many benefits of the importation of cattle, several challenges must be addressed. One of the main challenges is the risk of diseases. Imported cattle may carry diseases that can spread to local herds, which can harm the local agricultural industry. Additionally, logistical challenges may be associated with importing cattle, such as transportation and quarantine requirements. Importation can also impact local farmers, who may face competition from imported beef. In curbing the first challenge concerning risk of diseases, the Malaysia Government has placed relevant Government departments and protocols which will be discussed in the next paragraph to reduce the risk of diseases from the imported cattle.

In addition to the above, there are also several environmental challenges that should be considered. According to statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, animals such as cattle emit greenhouse gasses which contribute to global warming. The main greenhouse gasses that cattle emit are methane and nitrous oxide. Methane is emitted during the digestive process of cattle, and during manure storage and handling. Nitrous oxide is usually emitted from the use of fertiliser in the production of feed crops of cattle[7]. Further to the above, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has advised that livestock farming is a significant cause of soil erosion on a global scale as the conversion of forests into pastures and overgrazing may result in significant depletion of topsoil and organic matter, which could require several decades or even centuries to replenish.[8]

Protocol of Importing Cattle to Malaysia

In Malaysia, the Department of Veterinary Services ("**DVS**") under the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry regulates the importation of cattle. DVS plays an important role in overseeing the health and welfare of animals in the country, protecting public health through disease control and prevention, and supporting the sustainable development of the country's livestock industry.

Process of Importation

The first step is to obtain an import permit from DVS. The applicant should submit the import permit application at least thirty (30) days before the arrival of the cattle into Malaysia. The permit will specify the conditions of importing cattle, such as the age, breed, and health status of the cattle.

Secondly, the applicant will need to find a supplier of cattle that meets the conditions specified in the import permit. The supplier must also be located in a country that the DVS approves for cattle imports.

Before the cattle can be exported, the cattle must undergo a pre-export quarantine in the country of origin for at least twenty-one (21) days. During this period, the animals must be kept in a facility approved by DVS and undergo health checks to ensure they are disease-free.

After the quarantine period, the cattle must be transported to Malaysia in a container that meets the requirements of the DVS. Each consignment of cattle shall attach a valid import permit issued by Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services Department (MAQIS), certificate containing full description or identification of the animals, and a Veterinary Health Certificate issued by a competent Veterinary Authority of the country exporting the cattle[9].

The container must be cleaned and disinfected before loading the animals. Upon the arrival of the cattle in Malaysia, DVS will inspect the cattle at the point of entry. After the inspection, the cattle will be placed in quarantine for a period of up to twenty-one (21) days. During quarantine period in Malaysia, the cattle undergo health checks to ensure they are free from any potential diseases. The animals will be kept in a facility approved by DVS and monitored by a veterinarian.

After the quarantine period and health checks are complete, the applicant must obtain clearance from DVS before the cattle can be released into the country.

Conclusion

As conclusion, the importation of cattle to Malaysia is an important aspect of the country's agricultural industry. It helps to meet the growing demand for dairy products and beef, improve the quality of local cattle, and stimulate economic growth. The regulatory framework governing the importation of cattle by DVS ensures that all imported cattle meet the required health and safety standards. Nevertheless, there are also challenges associated with importation, such as the risk of disease and competition for local farmers.

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2. https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/ctHEMEByCat&cat=468&bul_id=R3BCR0FTUThWZm9VQUxzYzJERlRBZz09&menu_id=Z0VTZGUiUHBU TIVJMFpaXRRR0xpdz09.

3. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293226168_Analysis_of_Malaysian_beef_industry_in_peninsular_Malaysia_under_different_importation_policies_scenarios_and_rate_management_systems.

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5. <https://www.fao.org/3/bp204e/bp204e.pdf>.

6. <https://ap.fftc.org.tw/article/933>.

7. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fgene.2015.00033/full>.

8. <https://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/197623/icode/>.

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10. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/beef#:~:text=Livestock%20farming%20is%20one%20of,decades%20or%20centuries%20to%20replace>.

11.

12. https://www.dvs.gov.my/dvs/resources/user_1/DVS%20pdf/SQIE/2018/Protokol%20Import/12.12.2018/130418_Cattle_buffalo_breeding-New_Zealand-revised_130418.pdf.

13. https://www.dvs.gov.my/dvs/resources/user_1/DVS%20pdf/SQIE/2018/Protokol%20Import/12.12.2018/130418_Cattle_buffalo_breeding-New_Zealand-revised_130418.pdf.

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