

# PM: Need for better land use to raise output

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SHAH ALAM, Tues. — Farmers must ensure more efficient use of land to increase agricultural output to meet the needs of the country's growing population, Prime Minister Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said agriculture was an important component of the nation's economy, and in this context efforts should be taken to upgrade the technology, work culture and management of farms.

He called for the creation of an investment and business environment in the agricultural sector requiring high investments and efficient project management to attract more foreign investors.

Dr Mahathir said farmers, livestock breeders and fishermen should change their attitude to become a well-informed group so that they would not be left behind when the country attained developed nation status.

Speaking at the launching of the national-level Farmers, Livestock Breeders and Fishermen's Day celebrations at Bukit Cahaya Seri Alam Agricultural Park here today, he said:

"Apart from being sensitive to changes, farmers, livestock breeders and fishermen should enhance their skills, be more hardworking and innovative to grab the investment opportunities in the agricultural sector.

"In the development of the food industry towards the year 2020, efforts should be taken to make Malaysia capable of producing agricultural produce and food commodities at competitive prices to compete with imported goods," he said.

Dr Mahathir wanted the Malaysia Incorporated concept to be strengthened in the agro-food industry, particularly food production and integration of the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

"The agricultural, industrial and manufacturing sectors should play supplementary and complementary roles to achieve the objective of making Malaysia a developed country by the year 2020.

"Everyone should map out new strategies and be bolder to take steps in management, work culture and innovation to help fulfil this.

"Several food commodities had shown increasing production costs in terms of wages, land rental and return margin target, and this should be overcome," the Prime Minister said.

He said with the increase in the per capita income and economic growth, the food demand trend would move towards better quality stuff such as meat, fruits and vegetables, and adjustments in supply and production were necessary to keep up with this.