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FAO to assist farm projects globally

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation will co-operate with Malaysia and 32 other developing countries to increase food supplies to feed hungry populations.

Its director-general Dr Jacques Diouf said FAO would provide expertise and irrigation equipment to these countries to increase their food production.

"We are devising a framework for co-operation with developing countries to increase their food production so that they can contribute excess supplies to feed hungry people.

"By 2015, FAO hopes to reduce by half the current hungry population of 800 million which include 200 million children."

Dr Diouf was speaking to reporters prior to his departure today after a two-day visit.

He also met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Agriculture Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud to discuss FAO's food security programmes.

He said FAO would assist in developing Malaysia's overseas agricultural projects in South Africa, Malawi and Papua New Guinea.

"FAO will supply irrigation equipment to Malaysia's projects in South Africa, of which only eight per cent of land area had proper water control while 92 per cent depends on the weather.

"FAO is devising a framework for co-operation with the Malaysian Government to implement our food security programme. We also discussed several reforms for Malaysia's agricultural sector to become more effective besides its normal activities.

"FAO will continue towards this direction to increase global food supplies."

On Oct 16 each year, Dr Diouf said the FAO would launch its "Telefood programme" via international television and the print media, to raise the awareness of Governments of its programmes to feed hungry people.

"The responsibility of feeding impoverished countries is not solely FAO's responsibility but also that of the international society.

"We hope our international appeal for food supplies will receive a positive response from Governments of developing countries throughout the world."

On the famine in North Korea, Dr Diouf said although FAO had been providing assistance to the inhabitants since 1923, the severe weather situation had devastated its agricultural sector.

"FAO is studying the rehabilitation of these agricultural effects in North Korea.

"The situation is difficult and we estimate 1.9 million tonnes in food deficit," he added.

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