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Learn about foreign market's specific needs: Hishammuddin

THE local palm oil industry must learn the specific requirements and needs of the foreign customers and learn about the conditions of country they want to market their products in, Deputy Primary Industries Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said.

Hishammuddin said palm oil exports, especially to Third World countries such as Mongolia, can be difficult for exporters who do not know the conditions of the country.

"It will be very cold in certain months and, sometimes, the liquid oil may freeze. This is one of the challenges that Malaysian exporters have to overcome," he told reporters after opening the 17th palm oil familiarisation programme in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Hishammuddin was in Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan last week as a member of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's entourage.

He said it is important to study the market, industry and needs of the people where the countries are focused for marketing activities, so that we can adapt the products to suit the environment.

Despite a small population of 2.5 million, Mongolia can be a strategic base for Malaysian products to penetrate the neighbouring markets such as China and Russia.

"As we export our products to Mongolia, we can also penetrate the surrounding areas where we know have potentially higher market," he said.

Hishammuddin also stressed on palm familiarisation programmes especially in the new markets. Such a programme is important for the local palm oil industry for educate prospective buyers. It can indirectly serve as a counter-attack on negative campaigns on Malaysian palm oil.

The Palm Oil Research Institute of Malaysia (PORIM) is planning to organise a programme in Mongolia next year.

During Dr Mahathir's official visit, PORIM and Hunstech Food Research & Production Corporation of Mongolia signed a memorandum of understanding on palm oil application in Mongolia.

Hunstech executive director Dr Byambaagyn Khuukhenkhuu is currently one of the participants of the 17th familiarisation programme.

He said Mongolia imports palm oil products from Singapore or other third world countries. However, the Government is planning to import the products directly from Malaysia to be used in its food industry.

The Mongolian Government is also planning to buy crude palm oil from Malaysia and undertake refining processes there.

Besides using palm oil in their cooking, Mongolians also use seed oil, sunflower oil and soya bean oil.

(END)