

25 NOV 1997

Sulaiman-Price

MINISTRIES TO WORK HAND-IN-GLOVE TO TACKLE FOOD PRICE HIKES

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 25 (Bernama) -- The Agriculture Ministry will work hand-in-glove with the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry to tackle price hikes on food items, Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud said today.

He said any price increase for food items would only be allowed after a careful study taking into account the consumers' interests.

" We will consider the impact of a price hike on consumers before making a decision," he told reporters after opening the 24th annual general meeting of the National Farmers' Organisation here.

In this regard, requests from padi farmers to increase the price of padi would be studied carefully so as not to burden consumers.

Dr Sulaiman also said he wanted to see increased participation of the private sector to work along with the government to increase food output in line with the government's policy to reduce the RM8 billion bill in annual food imports.

Commenting on the dissatisfaction expressed by certain groups on the ministry's role to deal with the high food import bill, he said planning by the agencies under his ministry to boost food production took some time to show results as " we cannot expect change overnight."

In his speech, Dr Sulaiman said he wanted to see expansion of vegetable and fruit cultivated areas as well as increased livestock breeding and food processing activities to trim the import bill.

He said efforts to cut imports depended very much on the marketing mechanism of local agriculture produce.

In this context, he said, his ministry had asked the Farmers' Organisation Authority to help the National Farmers' Association to establish an effective marketing network nationwide.

On the call by the Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations (Fomca) that the ministry be renamed as Food and Agriculture Ministry, he said the proposal had its merit but the decision for a name-change lies with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

-- BERNAMA

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