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Sulaiman-Food

OVERCOMING COSTLY IMPORTS DUE TO DEPRECIATING RINGGIT

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 28 (Bernama) -- The government will increase food production and turn to cheaper source of food supply to offset the increase in food imports due to the depreciating ringgit, Agriculture Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud said today.

He said the yearly food bill of over RM9 billion could increase further if measures were not taken because payments were made in US dollars.

"This will increase price of imported food and lead to inflation," he told reporters after presenting excellent service award to staff of the Federal Agriculture Marketing Authority (FAMA), here.

"If it is not controlled it will further worsen the nation's balance of payment," he said.

He said the government had identified three potential areas in Kedah for intensive multi-croppings using modern technology and equipment.

He said the idea for multi-crops which was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would see major changes in the country's agriculture.

Two foreign experts had carried out an initial study in Kubang Pasu, Kuala Nerang and Baling with a follow-up study due in December, he said.

"We hope the first pilot project can start soon so that it can be implemented nationwide," he said. The project involves 4,000ha.

Sulaiman also said several agencies including Fama had been asked to look for cheaper source of food supply like Indonesia and Thailand.

During the function, he presented excellent service awards to 90 Fama staff. Fama Chairman Datuk Badaruddin Amiruldin, who is also Yan Member of Parliamnet, was present. -- BERNAMA

HJ HAR ABG