

13/02/1998

Proposals to improve Cameron flower industry

CAMERON HIGHLANDS, Thurs. - Proposals to develop the floriculture and vegetable industry in this highland resort will be presented to the Federal Government soon in a bid to boost food production and flower exports this year.

Cameron Highlands Flower Growers Association chairman Sally Chai said yesterday the proposals were contained in a six-month study undertaken by the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute.

Among them are the problems faced by flower and vegetable growers such as land for agriculture, communication, electricity disruptions and cold truck transportation facilities.

The RM198,000 study, jointly commissioned by the Cameron Highlands Flower Growers Association and the Vegetable Growers Association, was completed recently.

The proposals also list the need for a proper post-harvest grading, treatment facilities and cold storage as well as a packing centre for flowers and vegetables and less waiting time before departure at airports for flowers.

They will be presented to Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob next month and later to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We need the Government's help to improve the industry and turn it into a money spinner," Chai said.

Cameron Highlands - which exports about 80 per cent of its flowers to Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, United Arab Emirates, Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines - suffers an estimated 20 per cent spoilage due to these problems during peak seasons.

Chai said the rate could have risen to 40 per cent over the last few months because of higher production costs and static pricing of flowers in the export market.

Most of the flowers which were not sold were thrown away because it was unprofitable to export them.

She said because of these problems, many flower growers had switched to vegetable farming instead.

Currently, the 200 flower growers produce about 10,000 dozen of roses for the local market alone for Valentine's Day.

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