

Scheme to boost food production

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By ARIFF AWANG

MALAYSIA'S Permanent Food Production Park Programme (TKPM) is expected to generate food production worth RM209 million in the next two years from the production of 138,624 tonnes of fruits and vegetables. Of the total, RM141 million will come from the production of 70,800 tonnes of fruits and the remaining RM68 million will be generated from 67,824 tonnes of vegetables.

By the year 2003, a total of 959 participants are scheduled to get involved in the programme that will utilise 2,662ha of land in six states namely, Selangor, Johor, Ma-

lacca, Kelantan, Pahang and Perak. Under the scheme, the Government will earmark land permanently for food production activities that include fruits, vegetables and short-term farm plantations.

This is in line with its effort to reduce the country's dependence on food imports which total RM11 billion annually.

"TKPM also solves investors' queries on the absence of land for commercial and modern agricultural production activities," an Agriculture Ministry official said in Kuala Lumpur recently.

The programme will be officially launched by Agriculture Minister Datuk Mohd Effendi Norwawi in Rompin, Pahang on April 26.

Originally, TKPM was set up through agreements between the Agriculture Ministry and state governments. To date, the ministry has signed agreements with seven states, namely, Johor, Mala-

cca, Kedah, Perlis, Sarawak, Selangor and Kelantan.

A total of 48,000ha of land have been provided by the seven states for the projects. Inclusive of the other five states, the official said in total, there will be up to 100,000ha of land throughout Malaysia that will be utilised under the programme.

Initially, the programme that covers 590ha of land has been started in six locations in six states. The locations are Janglau in Rompin, Pahang (32ha), Sg Belankan in Sepang, Selangor (340ha), Telong in Bachok, Kelantan (40ha), Lekir in Manjung, Perak (30ha), Selandar in Jasin, Malacca (64ha) and Sri Pantai in Mersing, Johor (84ha).

Under the scheme, the Government will gazette and develop an identified piece of land before leasing it to an operator. The operator will run food production activities which include non-seasonal

fruits with short gestation period such as pineapple and watermelon.

Under the concept, the minimum land size used for vegetable plantation is 30ha while for fruit production activities, the minimum land size is 50ha. To attract involvement from the private sector, the ministry will choose strategic and potential land located close to populated areas and industries and have access to transportation system for TKPM projects.

Through the projects, the ministry also hopes that systematic, sufficient and consistent supply of vegetables can be achieved.

The latest technology practice can also be transferred efficiently to produce high quality vegetables. The project participants can also enjoy higher income as the infrastructure and marketing cost can be minimised through collective and mass operation.