

Govt to spend RM10m on 50 farm schemes

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Projects are part of 80 new farm projects identified by Agricultural Ministry to convince farmers throughout the country to opt for latest farming technologies

By EIRMALASARE BANI

THE Agriculture Ministry will spend some RM10 million for 50 flagship projects this year, says its Minister Datuk Mohd Effendi Norwawi.

He said the projects are part of 80 new agricultural projects identified by the ministry, to convince farmers throughout the country to opt for the latest farming technologies.

The projects will involve various food production such as fishery, livestock and fruits cultivation, which will be done through estate management.

"We are now trying to get farmers who have idle lands to register them with the ministry so that we can work something out with the lands on a profit-sharing basis," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

However, for the land to be effectively developed, he said, the size should be bigger than four acres.

Mohd Effendi said there are currently about one million acres land left idle by their owners and the ministry has identified those with 10 acres and above to be developed.

The minister had a meeting earlier with the Farmers' Organisation Authority (FOA), to restructure the body so that it can serve the farmers more effectively and form a stronger link between the ministry and the farmers.

FOA has about 650,000 farmers registered with it.

The ministry also plans to offer 10 services to the farmers via 213 FOA's offices nationwide, namely in human resources management, the management of feed and fer-

tilisers, infrastructure, mechanisation, new technology after harvesting, product marketing, product management, processing, agricultural counselling services, and information technology (IT).

He said a resource centre will be set up at these offices, including Internet facilities, with the help from Mimos Bhd.

"An IT awareness campaign will be carried out among farmers although some have already adapted themselves to

it. It is exciting to see ... it is exciting for them as well, I was told," he said.

The Internet facility is hoped to provide farmers with the latest information on agricultural and biotechnology information so that they can find out more on new mechanisation, diseases and marketing plans.

"With such information, they can plan their work in advance and more systematically, and therefore, more income for them," he added.