

22 MAY 2003

SABAH-FOOD

MAJORITY OF SABAH FOOD MANUFACTURERS HAVE NOT COMPLIED WITH FOOD ACT

By: Newmond Tibin

KOTA KINABALU, May 22 (Bernama) -- Majority of the local food manufacturers in Sabah had not complied with the provisions of the Food Act 1983 and Food Regulation 1985, particularly on nutritional labelling and claims for packed food, although the deadline is Sept 1 this year.

To resolve this, the Federation of Sabah Manufacturers (FSM), in collaboration with the Health Ministry Food Quality Control Division, organised a forum here today to discuss the issue.

Organising Chairman, Albert Chai, said that the forum was aimed at informing the more than 500 local food manufacturers in Sabah of the new ruling.

"I believe that a large number of these manufactureres have not done much to prepare for this new ruling," he told Bernama.

Under the Food Act and Food Regulation Act, food manufacturers must indicate the testing on protein, fat, energy value, carbohydrate and sugar content in their products.

Nutritional labelling is a description to inform consumers of the nutrient contents of the food.

Chai said that after Sept 1, food manufacturers who failed to comply with the Act can be fined or jailed.

He said that there was no ground for them to appeal for an extension of the deadline as the Health Ministry has given them sufficient notice.

Chai, who is a member of FSM, said that Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng has already made an announcement on the matter in 2000 and as such the food manufacturers could not now claim that they were not aware of it.

Meanwhile, Consumer Association of Sabah (Cash) president, Patrick Sindu, said that Cash fully supports the government's move to punish the offenders.

"In fact, this should have been done a long time ago. But there is no point in imposing a heavy penalty if there is ineffective enforcement of the law," he said.

He said that the authorities must continue to monitor the food products being sold to see if the food manufacturers were complying with the ruling.

Meanwhile, commenting on the strategic economic package worth RM7.3 billion announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday, Sindhu said that it was good for the people.

However, he proposed that a "special loan" be introduced for the low-income group, especially government employees to avoid "being sucked by loan sharks."

"We should get rid of the loan sharks or unlicensed money lenders, who normally charged exhorbitant interest rates to borrowers...that's why we need a special loan for this group," he added. -- BERNAMA

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