

**PM proposes food security policy**  
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today proposed a national policy on food security, as rising prices and shortages cause havoc across Asia. MCPX

"We need to have a national policy on food security," Abdullah told a press conference.

"We must have a mechanism to ensure that there are enough food supplies for people."

Anger over rising prices of food and fuel was one of the major factors in March 8 elections which saw the ruling coalition lose a third of parliamentary seats and five states in its worst results in half a century.

Abdullah said he had also tasked government-linked companies (GLCs) with expanding food production.

"I have also instructed GLCs to use vacant land to grow vegetables, fruit and plant paddy to increase rice supplies," he said.

Food prices have been spiralling higher globally due to a range of factors including rising populations, strong demand from developing countries, poor weather and the growing use of biofuels.

Analysts say that Asian governments face strikes, protests and hoarding in response to the spiralling cost of food and other essentials.

In Malaysia, the government earlier this year was forced to flood the market with flour and cooking oil to end severe shortages which stripped supermarket shelves.

Opinion surveys found that high prices were the number-one concern of Malaysian voters in the recent elections.