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# Felcra acts as lead agency to reduce food imports, says Najib

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*High food imports prompted the govt to direct its resources for food products cultivation domestically*

by P PREM KUMAR

FEDERAL Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority Bhd (Felcra Bhd) will spearhead the government's effort to reduce food imports, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Razak.

Felcra will also be the leading agency in food security initiatives in the country by producing more local products for domestic consumption, he said.

"Felcra can play a crucial role in ensuring food security and reducing food imports, which have been increasing steadily over the years. Felcra can compete in the areas of halal chicken and meat products as well as other crops," Najib told some 5,000 Felcra participants gathered in Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) yesterday to celebrate the agency's 50th anniversary.

He said the government has endorsed Felcra's request to spearhead its food import



Pic by Muhd Amin Naharul

**Najib (right) holding Felcra's commemorative coins in conjunction with its 50th anniversary while Felcra CEO Zulkarnain Md Eusope (left) and Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob look on at the PWTC in Kuala Lumpur yesterday**

reduction drive, with the agency expected to begin work next year.

"Felcra is serious in becoming the leading agency in the food security industry because no party has stepped up to deal with the scenario seriously and professionally," Najib said.

The premier highlighted that Malaysia relies heavily on imports to fulfil its food demand, which reached RM45.4 billion last year alone.

Of the total imports, edible

food products stood at RM5.2 billion, dairy products at RM3.4 billion, vegetables and fruits cost RM1.8 billion, while RM1.5 billion worth of cocoa products were shipped into the country.

Najib said the staggering amount spent on food imports prompted the government to direct its resources for food products cultivation domestically, in which over 110,000 Felcra members can play a very crucial role.

Meanwhile, in his welcom-

ing address, Felcra chairman Datuk Seri Bung Moktar Radin said the agency is prepared to share the government's commitment in reducing Malaysia's food imports.

"Food sector is a very profitable business segment and our country is relying heavily on imports. This is where Felcra can step in a bigger way to help to reduce the imports while at the same time provide more opportunities to our members," he said.

Bung Moktar said Felcra is

confident that food imports of the country can be reduced significantly in the next 10-15 years, as opposed to the government's target in 2050.

During the ceremony, Najib also announced Felcra's strategic collaboration with Sime Darby Plantations Bhd to explore synergies in several plantation sub-sectors.

He said among the synergies would be supply of plantation inputs such as seeds and saplings; management, consultancy, and plantation and mill training; and research labs and development of plant engineering.

"Both parties will ink a memorandum of understanding and work towards realising the sharing mechanism from next year," said Najib.

On the subject of education, Najib also announced a 20% discount rate, or RM4,000, for National Higher Education Fund Corp (PTPTN) repayment by students of Felcra colleges starting next year.

"For this, Felcra will set aside RM20 million for the next 10 years.

"About 500 students each year will stand a chance to receive this assistance," he said, adding that the government guarantees PTPTN loans for Felcra college students from next year.