

OVERCOMING STRUCTURAL ISSUES

PM: Innovate to protect long-term welfare of farmers, fishermen

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has called on officers and agencies under the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry to embrace innovation, strengthen cooperation and devise long-term solutions to safeguard the welfare of farmers and fishermen.

Speaking at the national farmers' market 40th anniversary celebration and the launch of the permanent farmers' market here yesterday, he said the sector must reject outdated assumptions and pursue bold approaches to overcome structural issues.

He stressed on the need for fresh thinking, and cited the success of Malaysia's durian industry and the cultivation of onion, which was once thought unviable, as examples.

"That is why I emphasise the

need to keep finding new approaches.

"If we truly want to support farmers and smallholders, their yields must increase and prices must be guaranteed at fair and reasonable levels.

"Agencies like Fama (Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority) must take the necessary steps, because what they do eases the burden of tens of thousands of farmers," he said.

Anwar also highlighted the need for better water management to prevent shortages during floods.

Anwar said farmers' problems could not be resolved by Fama alone, but required the collective efforts of the Fisheries Development Authority, the Farmers' Organisation Authority, Agrobank and the Agriculture

Department.

"What Fama and the ministry are doing is important, because when prices are guaranteed, we can drive higher productivity and improve food security.

"It doesn't make sense that in a country with such fertile land, we still face shortages of fruits, vegetables and other produce," he said.

Recalling his experience as agriculture minister in 1984, Anwar said farmers' markets were established so that farmers would be free of middlemen.

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DATUK SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM
Prime minister

He also presented several awards at yesterday's ceremony, including the Farmers' Market Special Awards and a Malaysia Book of Records certificate recognising Fama for creating an anniversary logo from over 40,000 bahulu cakes.

Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu, who was also present, said Fama recorded RM215 million in farmers' market sales from January to August.

With 229 markets nationwide, involving 5,618 entrepreneurs,

this year's sales have reached 65 per cent of the targeted RM330 million.

He said efforts to modernise the markets included introduction of digital platforms and e-commerce partnerships with Grab, which enabled consumers to purchase fresh produce online.

"Sales (via Grab) grew from RM90,000 in 2023 to nearly RM700,000 in 2024, and this year, we are targeting up to RM1.5 million.

"This initiative not only supports entrepreneurs but also allows consumers to save up to 30 per cent compared with regular market prices," he said.

Mohamad also encouraged Malaysians to cultivate essential food crops or rear small livestock on what space they had.