

**Parliament: No Cash Subsidy In Place Of Fertiliser Aid For Farmers - Tee Yong Bernama
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 1 (Bernama) -- The government does not propose to replace the fertiliser assistance to farmers with cash subsidy, the Dewan Rakyat was told Thursday.

Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Chua Tee Yong said this was to ensure that the government assistance was appropriately utilised for padi production as well as to increase the national padi output.

"The government is constantly looking at ways to help farmers. We believe that with the fertiliser assistance, we will see an increase in padi production," he said in replying to a question from Datuk Henry Sum Agong (BN-Lawas).

On the problem of fertiliser assistance failing to reach agricultural areas in the interior, Chua, who is also Labis MP, said the ministry would study the matter.

Replying to Ahmad Kasim (PKR-Kuala Kedah), Chua said imports, especially of onions, maize, wheat, poultry food and fruits, increased yearly to cater to additional demand. He said these items were not produced locally because of the unconducive climate and high production cost.

In this respect he said, the government has taken steps to increase food production in the country towards self-sufficiency and to minimise dependence on imports.

This was done through high-impact projects like the Permanent Food Production Parks, Aquaculture Industrial Zones, Contract Farming and Agro-based Entrepreneur Development, he added.

Chua said the ministry was also increasing exports to improve the country's trade balance by focusing on high value and competitive commodities, namely aquaculture, seaweed, bird's nest, herbal products, vegetables and premium processed food.

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