

**Government's Ambitious Plan To Empower Rural Poor  
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KOTA KINABALU, April 8 (Bernama) --- Sabah's Agropolitan model of agriculture-based project is an ambitious plan introduced by the state government to bring the Bumiputras, especially the rural poor, into the mainstream business and economic opportunities of the state.

The agropolitan projects is a high-impact initiative with far reaching goals of eradicating poverty as well as generating economic development in the state, whereby land development under the scheme will be owned by the poor by way of a communal title.

Under the communal title concept, a designated parcel of land is collectively owned by identified owners whose name will appear on the title.

The land under communal title cannot be sold without the collective agreement of every name within the title.

However, family members can be named to inherit the right of ownership (to the communal title) and the title cannot be individually transferred nor mortgaged.

The Communal title concept was launched in May 2010, following the amendment to Section 76 of the Sabah Land Ordinance on Dec 10, 2009.

According to the Sabah Institute for Development Studies (IDS), the concept is a proactive measure taken by the state government under the leadership of Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Musa Aman, as a way to overcome the poverty problem in the state.

The concept was also aimed to help speed up the land application process especially involving the Native Customary Rights (NCR) land application.

This approach is seen as the most effective measure in addressing issues relating to land ownership and poverty in the state.

"As it is, despite granting land to the natives for cultivation of agricultural crops, the state government found that many natives still live in poverty.

"Furthermore, there was also the problem of native land being sold for various personal reasons, such as financing the children's education.

"As such, in an effort to protect the welfare of the natives and to prevent native land falling into the hands of outsiders, the communal title concept was introduced," IDS said.

The agropolitan project is centred on three key focus areas, such as the major agriculture zone (MAZ), the community economic zone (CEZ) and the settlement area (SA).

The MAZ will be devoted to agriculture development such as oil palm plantation. The project is expected to help enhance the quality of basic infrastructures, utilities, amenities and social facilities in the area concerned.

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