

UK high commissioner says palm oil ban inimical to free trade
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Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Mah Siew Keong received British High Commissioner to Malaysia Vicki Treadell at his office in Putrajaya today, during which they discussed the proposed European Parliament's move to remove palm oil from biofuels mix by 2021.

Mah said Malaysia strongly opposed to the resolution as it would affect the livelihood of over 650,000 oil palm smallholders in Malaysia as the use of other vegetable oils was still permitted under the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) legislation until 2030.

"Treadell shared that the ban on the use of palm oil earlier than other vegetable oils is unfair and contrary to the spirit of free trade," he said in a statement.

At the meeting, Mah (*photo*) also expressed his appreciation to the members of European Parliament from the Conservatives in the UK – part of the governing party of UK Prime Minister Theresa May – who voted against the ban on palm oil in January.

Mah said both of them also discussed on potential of future cooperation between Malaysia and the UK, especially in exploring the development of palm oil-based high value-added downstream products to create new economic opportunities.

"Both sides agreed to organise roundtable discussions with key players in the local palm oil industry, potential investors, as well as technical experts from Malaysia and the UK," he said.

Mah said he would be leading a Malaysian delegation to Europe for the Malaysia-EU Palm Oil Consultation starting Saturday.

Besides meeting several EU commissioners and policy makers, the mission involves meetings with government representatives from six EU countries, namely Germany, the UK, Belgium, Spain, Italy, and Poland.

"This mission is aimed at negotiating with members of the tripartite consultation from influential countries to seek their support and deliver Malaysia's firm stand against the injustice done to the palm industry," he said.

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