

Govt in midst of drafting national agro-food policy - Dr Mahathir

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SERDANG, Nov 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government is in the process of drafting the National Agro-Food Policy 2021-2030, the objective of which is to spur the modernisation of the agro-food sector.

He said the Agro-Food 2.0 policy was crucial in making the food sector more competitive with the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

The policy will emphasise the development of infrastructure and the use of modern technology, the provision of human capital and commercialisation of agriculture including innovation in the key sectors, he said.

"This is in line with the government's focus on making the food sector more relevant and more competitive," he said when opening the Malaysian Agriculture, Horticulture and Agro-Tourism Exhibition 2018 at the Malaysian Agricultural Expo Site (MAEPS) here today.

Themed "Our Food Our Future", the biennial exhibition will be held for 11 days until Dec 2.

Also present were Dr Mahathir's wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Salahuddin Ayub and Chief Secretary to the Government, Datuk Seri Dr Ismail Bakar.

Dr Mahathir said the new policy entails restructuring strategies to expedite modernisation apart from managing demand and supply.

The policy would also streamline government and private sector investment for infrastructure development, human capital building for agriculture, research and

development, commercialisation and innovation, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government would also develop alternative inputs and new sources of income like coconut, water melon, star fruit and durian which have a huge demand locally and globally.

He said the new sources would be exploited via various research and development efforts and other measures, including from the aspect of business models, logistical support in terms of collection and distribution, refrigeration facilities and optimisation of transportation machinery.

“Indirectly, all food sector supply chains will be capitalised to the maximum. Farmers, livestock breeders and agropreneurs will have a new economic frontier, access to a wider market and a distribution chain that is more efficient,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said the agriculture sector will remain important and relevant because it is no longer seen as food production per se but accepted as a vital factor in assuring food security.

“Although food security is interpreted as sufficient supply of food for each citizen at any one time whether locally produced or imported, Malaysia must ensure a huge portion of its supply comes from local farmers,” he said.

Meanwhile, he said the contribution of the agriculture sector to GDP was still small, at just 8.17 per cent or RM37.4 billion last year when in fact it had huge potential.

The Prime Minister also called for MAHA to be the best platform for farmers, breeders, fishermen and agropreneurs to introduce their products and services to the public.

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