



**KEMENTERIAN PEMBANGUNAN
USAHAWAN DAN KOPERASI**
Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives

PRESS RELEASE

COOPERATIVES URGED TO ASSIST SARAWAK GOVERNMENT IN DEVELOPING SARAWAK TO BECOME MAJOR FOOD PRODUCTION HUB

Kota Samarahan, 3 April 2021 – Cooperative movements in Sarawak are urged to actively participate in the Sarawak Government's many initiatives to develop the state into becoming a global food production hub.

Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Minister Dato Sri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said cooperatives have the resources to potentially be one of the driving force in developing the state's food production sector further by investing in more commercial scale agriculture-based businesses.

Dr Wan Junaidi said it is time for cooperatives to be more involved in projects that can bring about huge multiplier impact not only for its members but the local community as well.

He pointed as of December 31, 2020, there are 1,077 cooperatives in Sarawak, with close to 300,000 members. During the period, the cooperatives in the state registered RM240.52 million in revenue, with total assets valued at RM636.14 million.

"In addressing food security issue, we need to start producing food locally to reduce dependency on imports. However, this may require huge capital, and that is why not many entrepreneurs are brave enough to venture into this.

"This is where cooperatives can step in. It has the resources to venture into other strategic investments, such as in commercial agro-based businesses. This type of investment could bring about huge benefits for the members as well as the community by creating job opportunities, accelerating infrastructure development in Sarawak and many more spill over effect," he said after visiting a Cavendish banana plantation owned by Koperasi Penduduk Daerah Asajaya Berhad, here, today.

It was earlier reported in 2019, Malaysia's total agricultural imports stood at around US\$18.3 billion, of which roughly 7 per cent was sourced from the United States.

Dr Wan Junaidi, who is also Santubong Member of Parliament, said the country, over the years, have seen how over dependency on imported food items could bring about many problems, ranging from health, safety, inflation as well as halal issues.

As a result of this, he said that it is time need for Malaysians to be more involved in food production, especially halal food, not only for domestic consumption but also for international market.

With 1.6 billion Muslim population across the globe, there is certainly a huge demand for halal products. It is estimated that the global market demand for halal products and services in 2019 was at US\$2 trillion.

Meanwhile, Dr Wan Junaidi called on all Malaysians to put all their differences aside and join forces in curbing the spread to deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Although the authority is gradually relaxing the rules relating to the movement order, this does not mean that we can stop adhering to safety SOPs.

In order to affectively stop the spread of the virus, he urged the rakyat to quickly register for the *Malaysia Prihatin* National COVID-19 immunisation programme to get themselves vaccinated.

As of April 1, only 31.4 per cent or 7.625 million Malaysians have signed up for the immunisation programme. In Sarawak, 622, 370 or 30.34 per cent of the state's population have registered to get vaccinated.

On the Emergency Ordinance, Dr Wan Junaidi said the provision is necessary to allow the government to handle COVID-19 situation effectively.

He said the provision, amongst others, enables the government to take faster action, such as acquiring buildings and use of private hospitals to handle COVID cases, which, in normal situation have to go through time consuming process.

"As such, I would also like to advise the rakyat not be dragged by those who wants to politicise this issue. Let's just focus in helping the government fight COVID.

"On calls by certain individual asking the King to end the state of emergency, I would like to remind them that there is a special committee to advise the King on this matter. Let's allow proper process to take its course," he added

MINISTRY OF ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATIVES