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Mustapa: Ministries told to present holistic study on national food supplies



Special Task Force on Jihad Against Inflation committee member Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed (Photo by Kenny Yap/The Edge)

PUTRAJAYA (Aug 22): The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries and the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs have been asked to present a holistic study in relation to the direction of the country's food supplies, said Special Task Force on Jihad Against Inflation committee member Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed.

This will cover studies related to smart farming strategies, land use for paddy crops, meat supply, and the increasing price of mackerel, he said at a press conference after chairing the 12th meeting of the task force on Monday.

Mustapa, who is also minister in the Prime Minister's Department (economy), said the committee has heard a presentation from the Malaysia Competition Commission (MyCC)

regarding the study of five food items, namely cabbage, mackerel, sawi, baby formula, and meat.

"It (the study) has been presented, but we are only suggesting that this study from [the perspective of the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs] should be combined with [that of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries].

"For example, for smart agriculture [related to paddy], efforts need to be implemented to ensure that areas of paddy cultivation do not decline," he said.

Regarding mackerel, he said MyCC's presentation pointed out the increasing prices and that there are members of the public who are unable to afford buying this "ikan rakyat".

He said Malaysia is dependent on 40% of local mackerel production and 60% of imported fish, namely fresh fish from Thailand and frozen fish from China.

"It (fish price) has to do with the country's fishery resources. The action taken is to increase the supply of frozen fish because it is much cheaper than fresh fish," he said, adding that efforts need to be made to increase Malaysians' interest in eating aqua fish or "freshwater fish".

Mustapa also said the supplies and prices of local chicken are stable with the average price at RM8.57 a kilogramme (kg), lower than the ceiling price of chicken set by the government at RM9.40 a kg, in Peninsular Malaysia.

"There is no issue [of oversupply], no issue over eggs. The price is in line with the price set by the government, which is for Grade A, for example, at 45 sen per egg," he said.

With regard to the "Keluarga Malaysia Cheap Sale" programme, Mustapa said as of last week, out of over 600 state legislative assembly constituencies, 120 had implemented it.

"The Special Task Force on Jihad Against Inflation will continue to mobilise all five leading ministries to ensure that [the 'Keluarga Malaysia Cheap Sale' programme] reaches all state assemblies at least twice a month so that as many people as possible can benefit from [the 'Keluarga Malaysia Cheap Sale' programme] initiative in reducing [their] burden of cost of living," he added.

In addition to the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs, the four leading ministries working together towards implementing the "Keluarga Malaysia Cheap Sale" programme are the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries, the Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development, the Ministry of Rural Development, and the Ministry of Federal Territories.

The "Keluarga Malaysia Cheap Sale" programme, which lets people buy essential goods at prices between 10% and 20% lower than market prices, is scheduled to last for 18 weeks until the end of this year.