

Official outlet for pig farmers to voice grouses

PUTRAJAYA: Pig farmers now have an official outlet to voice their grouses through a national consultative council, to be chaired by the Veterinary Services Department.

The council is expected to discuss current issues affecting the local pork industry, including production level and price concerns, on a monthly basis starting April.

However, the council would not be the authority to decide on the price of the meat, said Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister Datuk Chua Tee Yong.

"The council, emulated after the poultry council, is aimed at ensuring closer cooperation between the ministry and industry players.

"(But) They will not decide on the farm price for pigs as it is against the Competition Act," he said after a follow-up meeting with pig farmer associations at Wisma Tani here yesterday.

He said the number of pigs nationwide currently stood at around 1.8 million, producing some 232,000 tonnes of pork every year. However, the country imported between 16,000 to 17,000 tonnes of pork in 2010 and 2011.

Representatives of major pork producers in Penang, Johor, Malacca, Perak and Selangor are expected to join the council.

On a Department of Environment's proposed ruling on pollution and discharge control in pig and dairy farms, Chua said about 90% of Malaysia's pig farms were compliant with the BOD (biological oxygen demand) requirement.

"I would like to stress that the usage of ractopamine is allowed by the Health Ministry.

"But we will continue to monitor the situation and will look at the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's discussion in July on the use of ractopamine before updating the consumer and industry players," he said.