

PRIME NEWS

# Aid for agricultural sub-sectors

## EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN:

Priority is for plantations, livestock and fisheries

**KOI KYE LEE**  
KUALA LUMPUR  
kklee@nst.com.my



**A**N emergency action plan to mitigate the impact of the heatwave brought about by the El Nino phenomenon has been activated to help those in the agricultural sector.

Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister Datuk Seri Tajuddin Abdul Rahman said under the plan, three sub-sectors would be prioritised. They were plantations, livestock and fisheries.

He told the *New Straits Times* yesterday that the ministry had put in place an aid scheme to assist those affected by the heatwave.

"For those in the plantation sector, 281 tube wells, meant for irrigation purposes, would be built across the peninsula and would take no longer than a month to complete."

Tajuddin said the development of the irrigation wells would be focused on states that were badly affected by the heatwave: Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Negri Sembilan,

Malacca and Johor.

Asked on the allocation provided to build the tube wells, he said it would cost about RM4 million as this was meant for irrigation and water supply for agro-food activities.

Tajuddin said for this year, the ministry had allocated RM20 million, plus an additional RM4 million for irrigation and water supply, to help those in the agricultural sector.

It is learned that the allocation was in addition to the Integrated Agricultural Development Area in Kerian, which would include an advanced screw-pump system costing RM43 million.

Aside from the wells, Tajuddin said, 1,718 mobile high-capacity pumps would be provided to affected farms.

"This is an alternative solution. The ministry will provide them to water the farms and it depends on the needs of each location and state."

These pumps can pump between 85 litres per second and 140 litres

per second of water and are used in farming sectors.

Tajuddin said the ministry had halted the exports of fish like *kembong*, *selayang selar*, *cencaru* and *pelaling*, so there would be a sufficient stockpile for Malaysians.

"Because of the high temperatures, trawlers from the east coast states to Sarawak are permitted to follow the pelagic fish migration (route) as this will increase their catch."

On aqua culture and fish farming, Tajuddin said the ministry had recommended recycling water to minimise the strain on water pumps, and an integrated multi-trophic aquaculture programme to upkeep fish stock more efficiently.

He said the ministry had distributed aid packs, containing vitamins and energy supplements, to its field officers to be handed to poultry farmers to ensure sufficient water supply for those raising free-range livestock.

"Livestock needs adequate drinking water.

"We will provide water troughs in grazing lands in the peninsula," said Tajuddin.

Asked if the ministry would provide additional aid to those in the agriculture sector, he said it would depend on the situation.

"For the disbursement of *wang ehsan* (compassionate fund), we will need to see how serious the situation is before making a decision."