



# National Agriculture Workshop

For a Successful  
Food Production Sector  
in Malaysia

*Jointly organised by:*



**ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA**  
*[Education And Research Association  
for Consumers, Malaysia]*



**NATIONAL FARMERS  
ASSOCIATION**  
*[NAFAS]*

**Sept 19 - 21, 2000**

*at*  
**Crystal Crown Hotel,  
Petaling Jaya**

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## FOREWORD

Food is an issue that needs serious attention, especially in developing countries like Malaysia. This workshop is held to allow the actual practitioners, the farmers, the fisherfolk, the agri-business entrepreneurs, the men, the women and the youth to discuss with the technocrats, the policy makers, the financiers, the industry experts and the academicians a practical proposal to be developed to enable Malaysia to become a major food producer in the world market and simultaneously ensure that safe, nutritious and healthy food is available at affordable prices to the Malaysian consumers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Agriterra, an initiative of the Dutch Organization for Agriculture which is based in the Netherlands, for supporting this National Agriculture Workshop and our joint partner, the National Farmers Association (NAFAS).

It is ERA's sincere wish and hope that the Malaysian Government and the relevant agencies will continue to ensure food security in Malaysia through its people-centred policies and implementation to make Malaysia sustainable in its food and agriculture sector.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marimuthu Nadason', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Marimuthu Nadason  
PRESIDENT

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# **National Agriculture Workshop**

## **For a Successful Food Production Sector in Malaysia**

**19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2000**

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### **ERA CONSUMER MALAYSIA**

*(Education and Research Association for Consumers, Malaysia)*

ERA CONSUMER is a voluntary, non-political and non-profit organisation. ERA focuses on issues ranging from food security, human rights, environment, consumer rights to women's rights for a socially just and equitable society.

# Programme

## September 20, 2000

8.00 – 9.00 a.m.	Registration
8.30 – 9.00 a.m.	Arrival of Chief Guest
9.00 – 9.10 a.m.	Prayer
9.15 – 9.45 a.m.	Speech by the Chairman of the National Farmers Organization, followed by Opening Ceremony
9.45 – 10.15 a.m.	Tea break
10.15 – 12.30 p.m.	<b><i>Third National Agriculture Policy – Efforts towards a Successful Food Production; Focusing on Small Scale Farmers.</i></b> Followed by a question and answer session.
12.30 – 1.30 p.m.	Lunch
1.30 – 3.30 p.m.	Workshops  <b><i>First Workshop – Third National Agriculture Plan - Does it support the small scale farmers?</i></b>  <b><i>Second Workshop – To strengthen farmers’ organisation to face the challenges of the Third National Agriculture Plan</i></b>  <b><i>Third Workshop – To optimise environmental resources through organic farming</i></b>
3.30 – 4.30 p.m.	Plenary Session
4.30 p.m.	Tea break and end of first day’s session

## September 21, 2000

9.00 – 9.15 a.m.	Conclusions from the previous day's workshops
9.15 – 11.45 a.m.	Workshops for the second day
	<i>Fourth Workshop - Human Resource Development in the Food Production Sector - Challenges and Solutions</i>
	<i>Fifth Workshop - Involvement of Women and Youth in the Food Production Sector</i>
	<i>Sixth Workshop - Marketing System: Priority to Producer or Consumer?</i>
11.45 – 12.45 p.m.	Plenary session
12.45 - 2.00 p.m.	Lunch
2.00 – 3.00 p.m.	Closing Ceremony
	Speech by the Director of Farmers' Organisation Authority Malaysia (FOA)
	Presentation of certificates to the participants by Director-General of the Farmers' Organisation Authority (FOA)
3.30 p.m.	Tea break and end of ceremony

# Chapter I: Introduction

## The Development of the Agriculture Sector in Malaysia

The Malaysian economic development is an example of conventional economic theory, where it moved from agriculture-based economy to dependence on the industrial sector to increase national income.

Malaysia is stridently marching towards modernisation. The manufacturing and service industries are the main contributors to the national income. The Information Technology sector will be the wave of the future. The Industrial Policies will continue to be the backbone of Malaysia to achieve Vision 2020. Looking at the national contributors in 1998, the agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors contributed 9.4% to the Gross National Product (GNP), mining 8.1%, manufacturing 27.9%, construction 4.0% and service industry, a shocking figure of 55.6%.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this, a brave, difficult but strategic decision has to be made to ensure the country's progress now, and for the future, will be based on the agriculture sector.

Each country's agriculture sector is normally given intense information. The comparative advantage theory and uncontrollable globalisation are factors contributing to the food sector as an industry filled with controversies.

The agriculture sector in Malaysia has moved away from a sector that was once the backbone of the economy in the 1960s. Today, the sector is almost forgotten, at least until the East Asia Economic Crisis. If we compare the facts between the economic sector and the manufacturing sector, we can see this pattern. In 1960, agriculture contributed 33% to the Gross National Product (GDP); in 1970 – 29%, 1980 – 22.9%, 1990 – 18.7% and 1998 – 9.4%. At the same time, the contribution for the economic sector has doubled. From only 12.5% in 1960, the economic sector contribution has increased to 27.9% in 1998 just for the manufacturing sector.<sup>2</sup>

If we look into the development of the agriculture sector, we can see that since the last era before independence until the early 1980s, the agriculture sector was the main contributor to the development of the country. We cannot deny the fact that the agriculture sector through rubber, oil palm and tin brought the early progress to Malaya and attracted the attention of traders and other foreigners. Until the 1980s, agriculture development played an important role in national economic development.

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<sup>1</sup> Malaysia Economic Report 1999/2000

<sup>2</sup> Malaysia Agriculture Directory and Index 1995/1996

The Malaysian agriculture sector contributed one third of the GNP and half of the employment opportunities, and 50% of the foreign exchange in the 1960s. In 1970, the growth of the agriculture sector was 8%. However since the mid-1970s, the relative decline of this sector in the Gross National Product (GNP) was noticed, though the five-year national development plans in the 1970s still concentrated on rural development and agriculture. Though growth was still taking place in the agriculture sector, the overall contribution to the GNP declined due to the attention given to industrialisation.

This pattern continued with the overall income of Malaysia rapidly increasing due to industrialisation. The people experienced higher income levels and changes in lifestyle and food consumption, especially in imported food items. The population looked for food that were of “quality” and had “brand names”, e.g. Washington apples, Gardenia Bread and Kraft Cheese. Food import bills rose from RM3.06 billion in 1985 to RM4.58 billion in 1990, RM9.06 billion in 1996, RM10.08 billion in 1997 and RM10.51 billion in 1998.<sup>3</sup> The effect was two-pronged — (i) it increased import, (ii) it dimmed the domestic food production. The overall effect was obvious during the East Asian Financial Crisis that began in 1997.

## Food Production Sector in Malaysia

Malaysia was 75% self sufficient for food in 1997 (72% for vegetables, 94% for fish, 20% for beef, 6% for mutton, 134% for pork, 110% for eggs and 3.5% for milk).<sup>4</sup> Then, the hog industry was badly affected by the Nipah Virus and the EastAsia economic crisis rendered a hard blow on Malaysia which brought about high food price increases. This was coupled with other problems already existing in Malaysia, i.e. the inefficient marketing system, the production of food mainly for export, environmental pollution, competition from other industries, dependence on imported goods, devaluation of the currency and other national policies.

Although we managed to face this crisis without much negative impacts, (partly to our good fortune as the palm oil price increased), the petty traders faced huge losses due to price increases and the consumers were burdened with continued price increases. Ironically, this was faced by a country blessed with natural resources ideal for farming.

The food industry in Malaysia has come to a crossroads. The comparative advantage theory used to rationalise food imports should be abolished. The issue that Malaysia is a high cost food producer should be challenged and practical solutions should be highlighted. These

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<sup>3</sup> Data from the Agriculture Ministry

<sup>4</sup> Speech by The Honourable Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Hj Daud, Agriculture Minister, during the National Agriculture Food Conference, 20-21 July 1999.

are important steps for socio-economic and political factors which are far more important than foreign competition. It is even more important now because of the development of the domestic market liberalisation and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

There is an urgent need for a strong food production sector. This has been clear since the Economic Crisis that brought about the increase in the food import bill, rapid increase in the domestic food bills and the fall of the Suharto Regime. At the international arena, the dominating influence of the WTO and the push for globalisation and liberalisation is starting to worry the developing countries. Hence, the problems in relation to food production are urgent and pertinent now.

The Agriculture Sector and the food production sector of the country should be redefined. The macro and the micro economic framework should be changed to ensure a firm and stable growth in this sector. The most effective method would be to obtain the views from people who are most affected, i.e. the small producers.





## **Chapter 2: Activities - The evening before the consultation**

### **- Briefing and sharing of experiences**

**19<sup>th</sup> September 2000: 7.30 p.m. – 10.30 p.m.**

The sessions leading to the workshop began on the evening before the consultation. It was a briefing session by ERA for the farmers to explain that the main objective of the workshop was to allow farmers to debate and then to forward their views, ideas and issues to the other parties concerned (government, academic, business and civil society). Each workshop should end with its own resolutions and these resolutions should be presented during the plenary session.

The farmers were encouraged to express their views and opinions on what steps/programmes the government/other bodies should undertake to bring about a successful food production sector.

The first workshop was on the Third National Agricultural Policy – whether this policy supports the small producers. The second workshop discussed the plans of farmers' organisations in facing the challenges of the Third National Agriculture Policy. The third workshop discussed the optimisation of natural resources through sustainable farming.

The fourth workshop focused on the development of human resources in the food production sector. What are its challenges and its solutions? The fifth workshop looked at the involvement of women and youth in the food production sector while the sixth workshop discussed the marketing system and distribution channels for the food produced.

Two farmers from the Netherlands, Bert and Moniq, shared their experiences in farming in their country.

Bert, who is 35 years old, is a dairy farmer, married with four children. He has 125 cows and a 75-hectare farm. Holland is a flat country. Grass is grown for the cows to feed on during the summer and the grass is then cut and stored for the winter. What is unique in Holland is that the farms are at least one metre below sea level. One problem faced by the agriculture sector in Holland is the high cost of labour.

To overcome this problem, Bert invested in machinery to milk the cows two years ago. The farmers cannot milk the cows as they wish. Holland is a member of the EU and it is given a quota of one million litres of milk in a year. Another problem in Holland is the high land cost and stiff competition to obtain land.

Moniq, another farmer, is 30 years old and plants flowers for a living together with her brother. Her father started this business 35 years ago. She and her brother took over the farm

last year. There are 25 workers on the farm. Because the weather is too cold at times, they are forced to build glass houses. It is profitable to have bigger farms as this will reduce labour costs. Machines are used to plant flowers in pots as the labour cost is high.

Seeds are sold together with the young plants. The flowering plants are sold at a place near their home. The system that is practised is very good. Plants can be brought and sold at auctions. One party does production and another party does the selling. Even if there is a bumper harvest of flowers, they will be sold at the auction. The flower business is not always profitable but for the past two years, it has been satisfactory.

Bert went on to explain that all farms in Holland are privately owned. To get good returns, you have to be in control of the market or work together with others to be part of the market. Milk goes to a farmer-owned corporation which was started in Holland 100 years ago. Bert started involving himself in his father's farm when he was 22. He is also a member of the Young Farmers' Association which meets every month. He then moved on to being involved at the province and later the national level.

Bert also advised participants to plan before starting to work. A lot of decisions are dependent on the market. For example, the price of flowers. There are about 50,000 farmers in Holland and about 75% of them are members of the Farmers' Association. There are no middlemen and all profits are shared by all the members.

*A briefing session  
for the farmers  
before the  
workshop*



# Chapter 3: Presentation by Ministry of Agriculture, Malaysia.

## Strategic Framework for Agriculture Development

20<sup>th</sup> September 2000: 10.15 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

The government's strategic framework on agriculture is based on the following:  
Framework based on Products ← Strategic Framework → Framework based on land  
(based on market demand and taste) (based on land usage)

### New strategies by the government

National Importance and emphasis on :

- Food Security
- Reducing inflation
- Increasing productivity
- Increasing private sector investment in agriculture sector
- Increasing export
- Reducing unproductive imports
- Using natural substances

### Towards a Successful Third National Agriculture Plan

#### Mission

To reorganise the agriculture sector to one that is modern, dynamic and competitive

#### Success Indicators

- Contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- Contribution to trade
- Involvement of the private sector
- Income to the producer
- Innovation and technological know-how

#### The Present Situation

Contribution of the agriculture sector towards the GDP = 12.8% (RM17.8 billion)  
Contribution of the food sector towards the GDP = 3.8% (RM5.2 billion)

Problems faced

- High import bill in 1999 = RM 10.9 billion
- Globalisation :       WTO  
                                  AFTA — to be in full force in the year 2003
- 90% agricultural products are produced by way of traditional methods. Impacts of traditional agriculture :
  - low productivity
  - low technical know-how
  - poor domestic market
  - not economical

Investments :

<u>Produce</u>	<u>Current import value (RM)</u>
Onion (Indonesia & India)	245,777
Dried Chilly (India)	133,506
Potatoes (Indonesia)	157,929
Maize (US & Argentina)	987,681
Sugar (Australia)	972,286
Paddy (BERNAS)	719,239

**Table 1:      Estimated Contribution of Agriculture to the Food Sector (2000-2010)**

Commodity	Year 2000		Average Yearly Growth (%)	
	RM (million)	%	2000-2005	2005-2010
Paddy	702	13.4	1.1	1.2
Poultry & Cattle	1,112	21.2	1.8	2.8
Fisheries	2,221	42.3	2.9	2.5
Vegetables	635	12.1	5.4	6.5
Fruits	576	11.0	6.1	6.1
<b>Contribution to GDP Agriculture</b>	<b>5,246</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.5</b>

*Where is the Malaysian Agriculture Sector headed?*

**Projected Investment in Agriculture (2000-2010)**

Private Sector investment       =     RM 21,393 billion (66%)  
 Government investment         =     RM 11,039 billion (34%)

### New Characteristics of 3rd National Agriculture Policy (NAP3)

- Large scale agriculture and mechanisation – technological agro-industry
- Private sector involvement
- Technology and knowledge intensification, ICT
- Framework based on quality products
- Increase in R & D, marketing and finance.
- Human resource development
- Development of agro-tourism
- Technology Centre – Corporate agriculture companies

## **Transformation map**

From the present situation → Where are we heading?

### Transformation Strategies

Government to focus on:

- Main commodities
- New approaches (based on k-economy)
- Reorganising of institutions

## **Main commodities**

Criteria for main projects

1. Competitiveness
2. Reduction of imports and increase in exports
3. Food security
4. Not exposed to fluctuating price changes
5. Can attract private sector participation
6. Increase k-economy and e-economy in agriculture and new technology
7. Reduce labour usage
8. Diversification

## **New approaches**

- Marketability
- Estates
- Modern, large-scale farms
- Sound communication programmes
- Professional land managers
- Technological shift
- New technology
  - Glass houses
  - Aerophonics

- Hydroponics
- Precision farming
- Mechanisation
- Food production zone (state governments to gazette food production zones)
- Satellite farms
- Idle land to be utilised
- Private sector involvement in government plans
- Emphasis on nature – organic farms, Integrated pest management

## **Reorganising agriculture institution**

Institutions such as MARDI, FAMA and Agriculture Department should be reorganised and strengthened in order to eliminate low yielding seeds and eliminate ‘middlemen’ in order for farmers to obtain fair value for their produce.

In conclusion, the government’s stance is **towards transformation for a modern, dynamic and competitive agriculture sector based on markets and technology.**



*Some of the participants*



*Questions from the floor*

## Chapter 4: Workshops and Resolutions

### First Workshop: Third National Agriculture Plan – Does it support the small farmers?

To examine the elements in the Third National Agriculture Plan that help the small farmers / producers in the country. What are the concepts / approaches that actually help the small farmers?



*Some of the participants*

#### Objectives:

1. Based on the farmers' opinions, what are the problems faced since the First National Agriculture Plan was introduced in 1984?
2. Does the Third National Agriculture Plan support the small farmers?
3. What are the best policies to protect the small producers and to ensure that they are productive enough to achieve the Third National Agriculture Plan's objectives?

#### Resolutions

##### **Chair: Mr. Paul Sinnapan**

1. From the small farmers' point of view, the main programme that should be carried out is a programme to eradicate poverty and to enable the farmers become more independent and self-reliant.
2. Development of human resources should also be targeted at this group to bring out more farmer-leaders to be advocates of sustainable agriculture.
3. Activities based on income generation and skill and knowledge enhancement should be carried out.
4. There should be a smart partnership between the small producers and the private sector, where farmers still have control over the seeds, water and land.
5. There should also be a transfer of technology between the private sector and the small producers.
6. Farmers should make their own decisions to solve their problems.
7. Non-governmental organisations should provide community education and capacity-building for the setting up of farmer co-operatives.
8. There should be access to IT for the small-scale producers.

## **Second Workshop: To strengthen farmers' organisation to face the challenges of the Third National Agriculture Plan**

To analyse the strengths and weaknesses of farmers' organisations in Malaysia and to further discuss steps to strengthen these organisations.

### Objectives:

1. To obtain the opinions of farmers on the strengths and weaknesses of farmers' organisations and ascertain whether these organisations have been useful to their members.
2. To get the farmers' opinions on what steps should be taken to help them achieve the objectives of the Third National Agriculture Plan.
3. What are the objectives and the functions of the farmers' organisations in this era of globalisation and how can they help their members?

### Resolutions

**Chair: Dr Abu Hassan bin Mohamad Isa**

1. The National Farmers' Association through its network at the state and district levels must play a role as the main marketing agent for the farmers, with the help and cooperation from the Federal Agriculture Marketing Authority (FAMA).
2. To ensure that what is produced fulfils the needs at the domestic and international levels, the state-level farmers' organisations should play a role in planning based on the market information provided by FAMA. Planning should include marketing, packaging and processing.
3. To increase production, the National Farmers' Association (NAFAS) should make efforts for a more effective and productive usage of idle land.
4. NAFAS should also monitor the movement of seeds and labour.
5. The state and district-level farmers organisation should play a role as the agency to provide skilled labour.
6. Comprehensive training programmes should be carried out at the state and district levels.
7. At the state level, projects should be identified where interested youth can be involved.
8. Efforts should be made to increase participation of farmers at the district level through farmers' co-operatives.



## **Third Workshop: To optimise environmental resources through organic farming**

Pollution is on the rise and the fertility of the land is an important issue. What should we do to ensure natural resources would be available for the future generation? Is alternative farming, i.e. the organic farming the answer?

### Objectives:

1. Is conventional farming safe and profitable in the long run?
2. What are the farmers' views on conventional farming?
3. What should be done to ensure that resources (land fertility, clean air and water) will be maintained in this country?

### Resolutions

#### **Chair: Gurmit Singh**

1. The problem faced today is the problem of chemicals and the alienation between land and the farmer.
2. Farmers also face a problem as they buy genetic seeds from MNCs without knowing the implications and hazards of transgenic seeds.
3. Farmers should build in natural resistance in their plants. Farmers should use inputs such as natural fertiliser/compost.
4. Organic farming means (i) plants can be eaten by humans (ii) land does not lose its value and our children can continue to utilise the land.

*Some of the participants*



## **Fourth Workshop: Human Resource Development in the Food Production Sector – Challenges and Solutions**

The most challenging issue to the farmers in this country is competition from the giant agriculture companies in Malaysia and other countries. Only with the development of effective human resources can our farmers compete and increase their standard of living.

### Objectives:

1. To understand the human resource development problems faced in the agriculture sector.
2. To evaluate whether human resource development based on the Western approach can be used in Malaysia.
3. What can be done now to ensure a holistic life for the farmers?

### Resolutions

**Chair: Dr Pazim Othman**

1. Government agencies should find ways to educate farmers through the “hands-on” approach. Theories cannot bring about changes.
2. There should be a partnership between government agencies and the farmers.
3. The right type of land should be used for food production.
4. The state governments should change policies on land distribution.
5. The cost of living factor is the main factor why only a small number of youth are involved in the agriculture sector.
6. Parents who are farmers do not encourage their children to become farmers.
7. In schools, there is not much emphasis on farming.
8. The school co-curriculum activities should give equal attention to agriculture and IT.
9. The agriculture sector should co-operate with other sectors to strengthen its position, i.e. the infrastructure sector.
10. The agriculture sector should have joint-ventures with other progressive national institutions.
11. There should be a focus on environment-friendly eco-technology.

## **Fifth Workshop: Involvement of Women and Youth in the Food Production Sector**

Women and youth should be the cornerstone of the agriculture sector in the future. What are the specific steps that should be taken by the government and the private sector?

### Objectives:

1. What are the problems faced by women and youth in the sector of food production?
2. What are the effective steps that can be taken to ensure effective participation of women?
3. What are the effective steps that can be taken to ensure effective participation by the youth?
4. What are the roles of women and youth towards this challenge?

### Resolutions

**Chair: Ursula Goh**

1. The district-level farmers' organisation should identify youth from agricultural areas by organising agriculture projects where they can be taught.
2. The district-level farmers' organisation should organise skill courses such as baking and cookery classes. These courses can be taught by women to women from other villages.
3. The farmers' organisations should also introduce technical courses to women so that they can be more confident to be involved in the agriculture sector.
4. Farmers should encourage at least one of their children to be involved in the agriculture sector.
5. The approach to encourage more youth to be involved in the agriculture sector should change. Youth must see the profitability of being involved in the agriculture sector.
6. Food processing courses should be conducted widely for youth and women.
7. To encourage youth, the national level farmers' organisation should aggressively find ways to increase marketing opportunities so that youth can be involved.
8. To identify the potential of others becoming farmers.

## **Sixth Workshop: Marketing System – The Role of Producers and Consumers?**

Is the free market a fair market? Who receives the highest profits? What should be done to correct this?

### Objectives:

1. What are the marketing problems faced by the small producers?
2. What are the problems that can be faced with the onset of AFTA and WTO?
3. What should be done by the small producers and the farmers' organisations to overcome this problem?
4. What is the role of the government in this issue?
5. What is the role of the consumer and the producer in this situation?

### Resolutions

#### **Chair: Dr Larry Wong**

1. Small producers should work together so that they are more professional and united in facing challenges.
2. Marketing information network should be upgraded for the small producers.
3. Efficient information networking nationwide should be prioritised, especially since the possible impacts of WTO and AFTA on small-scale farmers.
4. Ministry of Agriculture should pay attention to domestic and international food marketing issues.
5. There should be more producer-consumer markets encouraged to eliminate the middlemen who benefit the most from the food supply chain.

## Chapter 5 : Conclusion and Recommendations

From the workshop sessions, it was concluded by the participants that the core potential identified to improve agricultural productivity and food production requires focus on a new group of actors – the middle and low-income group who are employed and often newly married. Many now undertake farming as a part-time occupation to spend their time more productively, to meet their food needs and as a source for additional income.

In Malaysia, the current approach to train and induce unemployed youths into agriculture is not successful. This is because of two reasons. First, because of the low social esteem given to farming. Second is the thirst for adventure, seeking fortune, employment opportunity, and urban living that discourages the youth from living in the countryside.

In fact, youth in farm households are leaving homes to go to towns to seek employment to supplement the income from farming to support their parents and elders. This situation is leaving only the elders and old folk in farms. Farming in essence has become marginalised in Malaysia, with lots of land left idle.

The solution proposed by many quarters that private sector becomes involved in agriculture by opening up lands and commercialising agriculture is not a practical solution for two reasons.

First, this is a capital-centred neo-economic approach that focuses more on production than on livelihood options. Commercialised agriculture often is “monoculture” and depends heavily on chemical inputs. Both monoculture and heavy use of chemical inputs are characteristics of non-sustainable agriculture. In fact, besides being non-sustainable, such agriculture in the long run pollutes, depletes and destroys natural resources.

Second, return for investment in agriculture is low. The private sector has to be induced into agriculture, and this requires subsidies and incentives, especially from government. This is not a good and sustainable solution.

Malaysia has great potential to produce and meet the food needs of the nation. Malaysia as an agricultural-based country has abundance of the resources that are very suitable for food production. In Malaysia, we have an extremely appropriate weather for the planting of food crops and even a good sunshine that is required by each plant. Besides that, the occasional

rainfall in a year provides sufficient water density and humidity for a plant to grow. This is an advantage because food crops can be protected from damage during the dry season.

The next focus on the potential in Malaysia's agriculture sector is our youth. They are the new generation that will provide the labour force that is needed to manage a farm. Most of them come from farmer-based families who are very experienced in managing a farm because of their exposure since childhood. Furthermore, the youth possess a high level of education, mainly in the agriculture sector. This means that our youth are knowledgeable and energetic and have the potential to be future entrepreneurs, especially in this important sector. Therefore, they would be able to expand the food production in the country if trained and guided properly, with the government giving top priority to agriculture as an esteemed profession. This will surely reduce the number of imports of food from other countries.

There is also adequate land for agriculture and farming in Malaysia. The suitable soil for agriculture is in all 14.75 million hectares, of which 7.15 million hectares are found in the peninsula, 3.15 million hectares in Sabah and 4.5 million hectares in Sarawak. Malaysia is a very strategic country because it consists of not only the lowlands but also the highlands such as Cameron Highlands. This enables a huge variety of crops to be planted, according to the different topography. Land needs to be reformed to be brought under the federal ambit if we are serious about resolving the problem of idle land.

Another good thing about Malaysia is its strategic location. It is located on the equator and away from all the natural disasters like earthquakes, volcanoes, typhoon and flash floods that often occur in many other countries. This will allow for a stable and continuous production of food crops.

The opening up of new land for food crop cultivation rather than cash crops can increase local food production and at the same time, reduce the country's import bill. Government should provide support services and appropriate incentives, including land, to facilitate food production. Services such as R&D, training, extension and support services as well as the provision of credit facilities and basic infrastructures should be provided to encourage farmers to venture into food production farming, adopt sustainable, appropriate technologies and increase productivity.

## Chapter 6 : Activity Plan for the future

What is needed is an innovative initiative and a process to create awareness, educate and build the capacity of farm households to transform their mindset from “terima bantuan”, that is the “receiving aid” syndrome, to “semangat berdikari” or the “spirit of self-reliance”. Second, identify farmers willing to undertake part-time agriculture, organise them and train them in sustainable production, accessing resources, markets and becoming the support group for rural farmers, effectively eliminating exploitation by middlemen. They could organise themselves in co-operatives or joint venture partnerships.

It was recommended that ERA Consumer conduct a baseline survey to document and collate data covering land tenure, food production and income distribution which would be crucial to plan and implement elaborate policies to ensure farmers at village levels are food secure and are able to increase their livelihood through sustainable methods without an adverse impact on the environment. Based on the information collected, initiatives with the farming community will be planned and implemented to mobilise and strengthen their capacity to face direct or indirect challenges of globalisation.

A simple ceremony by the Director-General of the Farmers Organisation Authority (FOA) with the presentation of certificates to all the participants brought the consultation to a close.

The workshop ended with a note of thanks from the President of ERA Consumer, Marimuthu Nadason, for the participation of the farmers in the discussions as they were the main target beneficiaries of this workshop cum consultation.

The participants expressed their thanks and hoped more of such consultations would take place on a regular basis.



*Presentation of certificate to one of the participants*

## Participants' List

- |    |                                      |  |   |
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