

Reducing reliance on imported rice

Sarawak creates four rice fields to be cultivated with high-yield hybrid seedlings – Premier

Galleo Petingi

GEDONG: Sarawak aims to mitigate Malaysia's dependency on imported rice with the creation of four new rice fields that will be sown with high-yield hybrid seedlings, says Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg.

However, he pointed out that the production would first serve the needs of the state.

"We have identified four locations for this: Kampung Lubok Punggor in Gedong, Tanjung Bijat in Sri Aman, Spaoh in Betong and Tanjung Purun in Lundu for this purpose.

"The hybrid seedlings are being studied by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Global Farm Biotech, and have the capacity to produce up to 200,000 metric tonnes of rice per 10,000 hectares in a year, which should enable us to fulfil 80 per cent of the consumption needs of the people in the state," he said during a press conference called after his visit to a padi-planting project site in Kampung Lubok Punggor here yesterday.

Abang Johari said with the hybrid seedlings being planted in Kampung Lubok Punggor, one hectare could yield between eight and 10 metric tonnes of rice.



Abang Johari (third left) seen at a padi field in Kampung Lubok Punggor, in Gedong. Also seen in the group photo are Dr Rundi (left) and Rubiah (third right). — Photo by Chimon Upon

In comparison with the normal breed, he said usually Sarawak could produce three to five

metric tonnes of rice per hectare. "With the hybrid seedlings, we can produce eight to 10 metric

tonnes per hectare, and this is not even during the harvest season.

"If the seedlings were to be harvested during its season, we could produce more than 10

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Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg

metric tonnes per hectare," he added.

With the use of the hybrid seedlings, he did not discount the possibility that Sarawak could become a rice-exporting state in the future, provided that the land areas dedicated for rice cultivation could be expanded further.

Accompanying him during the work visit were Minister for Food Industry, Commodity and Regional Development Sarawak Dato Sri Dr Stephen Rundi Utom, and federal Deputy Minister of Rural and Regional Development Datuk Rubiah Wang.