

# Premier wants further study on use of AI to up paddy yield



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**GEDONG:** A call has been made on Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) to further the research on paddy production in Sarawak using artificial intelligence (AI) application.

Speaking at a press conference after officiating at the 'Program Jalinan Kasih Tani Beranyi' in Dewan Kampung Lubok Punggor Gedong here yesterday, Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg said technologies especially AI would play a significant role in intelligent agriculture.

Citing one of the technologies used by palm oil farmers in Bintulu as an example, he said by using smart devices, paddy farmers would not need to work in the fields 'under the hot scorching sun' to harvest their crops.

"For example, palm oil farmers in Bintulu now can harvest the fruits by using remote control.

"I believe the tractors and machines that we see today will be modified and innovated into a more convenient size to make them lighter and easier to be used and applied with AI. It can be done through technology. So I'm asking UPM to go towards that direction," he said.

Adding on, Abang Johari said using such advanced technology would enable paddy farmers to monitor environmental data and agricultural images for a smart farm.

He said developing a smart paddy monitoring system could also help paddy farmers analyse the rice yield while instantaneously improving the rice in a way that reduces costs.

"They can fabricate the machine.

"After all, it's just modification by using AI and then they can control via remote control. So it will be convenient for paddy farmers to access their paddy,"

he said, adding that it could also offer cost-effectiveness as it would reduce labour cost.

Abang Johari also said switching from conventional paddy planting method to AI-driven farming would 'promise great opportunities', especially in optimising and harnessing farmers' agricultural land.

According to him, utilising technologies and AI would open up opportunities for paddy farmers to generate better income, which could even reach up to RM6,000 per month.

"For example, using hybrid seedlings, which are currently being developed in Lubok Punggor, could yield five harvests within two years, and this would give farmers an additional income of 60 per cent.

"I had been briefed by the UPM on the outcome of the study last month, where I asked them to conduct a study on a new method for planting rice by using modern technology to increase the income of our farmers," he added.

The Premier believed that the pilot project using technology and innovation applications through the Internet of Things (IoT) in Lubok Punggor would become a model for developing paddy in other areas if the research is successful, towards realising Sarawak's aspiration to become a rice exporter by 2030.

"This is the future of our agriculture and we must have a road map. That is why we want the research on paddy production to include the use of the machines.

"Everything can be done by just modification of the machines," he said.

On a relevant matter, Abang Johari said Malaysia could have the capability to control the market price for rice if local paddy production was able to meet self-sufficiency.

Adding on, the Premier said increasing paddy production would be crucial especially in preventing the country from being affected by foreign currency fluctuations.