



BY GOH PEI PEI

tribunenew2019@gmail.com



anytime.

Sarawak can attain rice self-sufficiency in five years

KUCHING: The Sarawak government is actively promoting the cultivation of hybrid paddy using modern agricultural techniques to bolster the state's rice production and achieve self-sufficiency within the next three to five years.

Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg said this was to ensure an adequate rice supply for the state's population, thereby reducing dependency on imported rice, which is susceptible to price fluctuations due to foreign exchange rates.

By harnessing modern technology and cultivating hybrid paddy, he said, Sarawak could not only meet its domestic rice demand but also potentially become an exporter.

"It is my hope to see that Sarawak is able to attain self-sufficiency in rice production by the year 2027 to 2030, with the possibility of starting rice exports as well as other downstream activities," he said.



ABANG Johari visits the hybrid rice planting project site in Kampung Lubok Punggor. Photo: UKAS

However, he said, the traditional rice cultivation methods would not be able to achieve this goal, thus, he encouraged paddy farmers and industry stakeholders to embrace hybrid paddy cultivation and modern agricultural practices.

Furthermore, Abang Johari said the modern agricultural techniques are able to mitigate challenges posed by climate change, such as extreme weather conditions, thereby ensuring the resilience and sustainability of Sarawak's agriculture industry.

He said this during a press conference after the 'Jalinan Kasih Tani: Beranyi Bersama YAB Premier Sarawak' at Kampung Lubok Punggor in Gedong yesterday.

He said a study conducted in Lubok Punggor, Gedong, by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in collaboration with local farmers has shown positive results by producing rice crops that could be harvested up to five times in 24 months.

"The hybrid variety here can produce between eight and 10 metric tonnes per hectare per harvest as compared to three to five metric tonnes per hectare per harvest (for the ordinary rice variety).

"So, I consider this pilot project in Lubok Punggor as successful and we have identified 10,000 hectares of land throughout the state for the purpose," he said.

Abang Johari, who is Gedong assemblyman, also said the Sarawak government has allocated RM30 million to upgrade the irrigation and drainage systems in the paddy cultivation areas concerned.

As for the farmers' income, he said, it is expected to increase to RM6,400 per hectare per month.

"If a villager (or a farmer) has about two hectares, it will be over RM12,000 (of income) per month using the hybrid rice seeds," he said.

Thus, he assured that the Sarawak government is committed to enhancing food security, fostering agricultural sustainability, and boosting economic growth in the state.

UPM Vice Chancellor Datuk Prof Ahmad Farhan Mohd Sadullah, Minister of Food Industry, Commodity and Regional Development Datuk Seri Dr Stephen Rundi Utom, State Secretary Datuk Amar Mohamad Abu Bakar Marzuki were among those present.