

Govt to enlist varsities in move to boost food security agenda

SERDANG: The Higher Education Ministry is in the process of identifying the strengths of each university to be strategically mobilised in advancing the national agenda on agriculture and food security.

Its deputy minister Datuk Mustapha Sakmud said the involvement of academics and institutions of higher learning is crucial to ensure the agenda is achieved in a sustainable manner.

"That is why we strongly encourage networking among universities, so we can pool all available expertise to collectively explore how to address food security challenges at reasonable costs," he said after officiating at the closing ceremony of the National Food Security Conference 2025 at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) on Wednesday.

The conference, which began on Tuesday, was organised by UPM in collaboration with the Higher Education Ministry and the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry.

The main focus of the conference, among others, was to discuss the direction of national agricultural and food security policies.

The event brought together policymakers, academics, NGOs, entrepreneurs, students and industry players in an open forum featuring keynote addresses, plenary sessions, research presentations and panel discussions.

In his speech, Mustapha stressed that a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders, including the government, industry players and farmers, is crucial for the country to address its food security challenges.

"One of the key challenges facing the nation is ensuring our food security. Therefore, the effort to get everyone thinking about this is vital to address this issue," he said.

UPM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Farhan Mohd Sadullah said the UPM-led Food Security Nexus involves 20 public and seven private universities.

"We've held several workshops and outlined several actions we aim to pursue, with the hope that high-impact research can be utilised by both the government and industry," he said.

UPM plans to broaden cooperation to include Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and polytechnics.

"The use of technology is vital to transform farming communities. High-level technology is typically housed within universities, but when it comes to implementation, we need the involvement of TVET and polytechnic institutions," he said. – Bernama