

# Don: Soil erosion can hurt vege supply

## Landslides can 'degrade fertile land to the core'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysians may face a shortage of vegetables if soil erosion at Cameron Highlands continues to occur every year, says an academic.

Prof Dr Shamsudin Jusop of Universiti Putra Malaysia's Faculty of Agriculture said as the highlands experienced more landslides, fertile topsoil supporting plant growth would be washed away, leaving behind nutrient deficient subsoil unsuitable for farmers to grow crops.

"To keep their farming businesses going, farmers have to apply higher amounts of fertilizer," he said, adding that if the practice continues, the land will eventually be unable to support plant growth.

"This type of vegetable production is not sustainable. It makes money for sure, but the land is degraded to the core," said Dr Shamsudin.

He said the National Agro-Food Policy (2011-2020) outlined proper soil management as a means to promote sustainable farming.

"The Government is trying to make sure people do not go hungry. Hungry people will be angry people," said Dr Shamsudin.

He said if soil integrity was not preserved, it would adversely

affect farmers in the future.

"The land we are using for agriculture does not belong solely to us, but rather to our children and our grandchildren," he said.

Dean of UPM's Faculty of Agriculture, Prof Dr Abdul Shukor Juraimi suggested that terraced farming be practised as a solution to the perennial landslides at Cameron Highlands.

"Terraced farming saves space and is an excellent alternative for conventional farming which uses up acreage," he said.

Dr Shukor stressed that farmers should be prohibited from performing land clearing or growing crops along the edges of cliffs.

"Farmers and workers should be given adequate training so that they understand how their actions affect the highlands," he said.

"In addition to barring illegal farming, trees should be replanted at landslide-prone areas to prevent such incidents in future."

On Nov 5, five people were killed when flash floods and landslides hit Cameron Highlands.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin blamed the tragedy on illegal land clearing and farming practices that did not comply with highland agricultural standards.