



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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Media Statement

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CAP IS AGAINST THE USE OF DRONES FOR AERIAL SPRAYING OF PESTICIDES IN PADDY FIELDS

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is very concerned and strongly object the decision made by the Muda Agriculture Development Authority (MADA) to encourage rice farmers to use drones for spraying pesticides onto their paddy fields as a pest control method.

Aerial spraying of pesticides will not only cause serious air pollution but also exacerbate health problems associated with pesticides, more easily and widely.

Quoting a statement by MADA General Manager Datuk Fouzi Ali, published in Utusan Malaysia of 24 January 2017, CAP is objecting this decision based on previous bad experiences due to pesticide poisoning from aerial spraying in Kasaragod, Kerala and other areas.

According to Datuk Fouzi the use of drones is more effective and saves time and MADA is now actively promoting the use of the aircraft imported from China. Initially eight drones will be used in the first season of this year which is expected to begin next April.

The use of drones is said to be faster and takes only 15 minutes per hectare. At an elevated level, we fear that the spread of poison will also be rapid and more widespread.

The negative consequences of the use of drones will be more pronounced in children and pregnant women who are exposed to the toxic air pollutants. Even at low concentrations pesticide residues can be harmful to the environment and human health.

CAP also finds that drones are not suitable for use in the MADA area as there are many villages near the paddy fields and the residents who live here will be inhaling the poisonous chemicals. Other crops that are cultivated here, water bodies, animals and aquatic life will also be affected by the aerial spraying which would contaminate the air with poisonous pesticides.

In addition to the cancellation of this ill-conceived plan by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry, CAP urges the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to pay serious attention to technologies such as this which are hazardous to the environment and public health, and ensure that they are not used in this country.

MADA should be moving towards chemical-free farming to ensure food safety and security, enhance agro-biodiversity and protect the environment. Aerial spraying of pesticides using drones is irrational and the proposal should be scrapped immediately.

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