



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang
Consumers Association of Penang
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Press Release

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THREAT OF WEEDY RICE IN MADA AREA

CAP Urges Review of Direct Seeding Method and Use of Modern Technology

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) urges the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry to conduct a comprehensive study on the occurrence and causes of weedy rice at the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) area.

Recently, local media reported that 15,000 hectares of paddy fields in Perlis and Kedah within the MADA rice bowl area of 100, 685 hectares has been affected by the weedy rice problem.

CAP is astounded why the weedy rice problem has yet to be resolved although farmers have been facing this problem for more than 10 years. Why wasn't a detailed study with recommendations to resolve the problem effectively not taken earlier to curb the problem from becoming serious and burdening the farmers here.

CAP is concerned that besides the problem of weedy rice, MADA farmers also face the threat of sambau grass or goosegrass (*Eleusine indica*). Weedy rice can affect rice yields between 60 and 90% while sambau grass can reduce farmers' yields between 10 and 80%.

CAP's survey found that the two major problems faced by 63,000 farmers, comprising of pest attacks and paddy disease, have resulted in a decline in revenue of more than 50% during the harvest season.

CAP estimates that ever since these problems occurred, as a whole the losses amounting to tens of millions of ringgit have been experienced by MADA farmers.

In view of this, CAP calls on the Ministry to conduct a study on the effect of direct seeding system, the use of harvesting machinery, chemical fertilizers, pesticides and rice seeds in the MADA area.

CAP believes that there is a possibility that all the abovementioned practices, including the problem of water supply that is often encountered by farmers here have contributed to the emergence of weedy rice, sambau grass, pests and rice diseases in this area.

The introduction of modern technology and practice of current agricultural systems including the use of chemicals should be reviewed by the Ministry and relevant agencies. CAP is concerned that the adverse effects of conversion to modern technology will affect the livelihood of MADA farmers and affect our country's food security in the future.

Hence it is necessary for the relevant parties to conduct a detailed study on this matter so that the cause of the problems affecting farmers in the MADA area is addressed effectively.

On the allegations that there was a deceptive element in the production and sale of poor quality paddy seeds linked to the growth of weedy rice, CAP recommends that a thorough investigation and strict actions are taken on those found to have cheated.

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