

FORUM KESELAMATAN DAN KEDAULATAN MAKANAN MALAYSIA

MALAYSIA FOOD SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY FORUM



MEDIA STATEMENT

FARMERS, COMMUNITY GROUPS AND NGOs CALL FOR CONSULTATIONS BEFORE PROPOSED SEED LAW GOES TO PARLIAMENT

Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister, YB Datuk Salahuddin Ayob on April 8, 2019 announced that a new seed law is being drafted to control and deal with illegal distribution of illegal seed in the market and to be tabled in Parliament after consultations with other agencies.

On 7 May, 2019, 62 community and civil society organisations, cooperatives and research institutes have sent a memorandum of concern to Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Seri Dr. Wan Azizah binti Wan Ismail, Minister of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry and Minister of Water, Land and Natural Resources expressing deep concerns that seed certification laws in the name of "quality control" can have serious negative impacts on small farmers and the rich diversity of crop seeds in the country.

We support the government's intention to ensure the quality seeds that are free of disease are supplied and planted by farmers; but our study of seed certification laws in other countries raises some concerns:

1. Seed laws prohibit the practice of saving, exchange and sale of seeds by farmers. These cover staple crops such as rice, vegetables and fruits. Saving, exchange and sale of seeds is a common practice for farmers in Malaysia for a long time and the restriction is a denial of the rights of farmers. The infliction of a fine and treating farmers as criminals could trigger protests and objections as seen in Indonesia (2004 to 2010), Colombia (2013).
2. Seed laws make it compulsory for farmers, seed breeders and seed producers to conduct laboratory tests, apply for certification and register those seeds in line with certain pre-conditions. There is also a need to have annual registration. This will result in increase in the price of seeds.
3. Seed laws encourage monoculture in agriculture where varieties introduced in the market will gradually diminish and will discriminate against the diversity of farmers' varieties and farmer seed systems as well as threaten biological diversity in general, thereby reducing the production of local food production. This is because the risk of weeds, pests and new diseases is higher against monoculture.

4. This may lead to limited varieties of seeds in the market, and farmers are forced to follow conditions that are determined by big seed companies, including foreign companies. Foreign certified seeds may not be suitable for the local conditions. This will also increase the dependence of the country's food supply system on foreign countries that are producing new seeds,

We believe that proposed Seed Bill is in conflict with the international agreements that deal with the rights of farmers and crop biodiversity that Malaysia has joined:

- a) Convention on Biological Diversity;
- b) Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing;
- c) International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- d) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and
- e) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

Therefore, we request that the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industries disclose the text of the Seed Bill to the public and consult with organizations working with farmers in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak as well as their own farmers' groups before tabling this Bill in Parliament.

We assert that any legislation that is to be introduced must address the well-being of the farmers and food sovereignty of the country without sacrificing the rights and freedoms of farmers related to seeds and farmers' seed systems. To ensure that this is done, the farmers must be directly involved in the decision-making process.

Together with this press statement, we attach the MEMORANDUM that has been sent to the Government.

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