

Ahead of Aidilfitri, farmers urge poultry traders to keep prices reasonable

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BY SOO WERN JUN



Chicken traders are pictured at the Pudu wet market in Kuala Lumpur May 18, 2020. — Picture by Shafwan Zaidon

KUALA LUMPUR, May 19 — With Hari Raya fast approaching, there is a rising concern of price hikes on staple food items such as poultry.

Federation of Livestock Farmers' Association of Malaysia broiler unit chairman Kwei Yew Tong however, said the fault was with traders, who've been making a killing in poultry sales.

Since most businesses have been allowed to resume after the conditional movement control order (CMCO) was enforced on May 4, Kwei said poultry traders, specifically chicken, should try to keep prices reasonable.

“During the initial weeks when the MCO was enforced, the market for chicken dropped by half. Say our usual cost price was at RM5 per kg but it dropped to about RM2.30. But did you see retail prices decreasing?” he asked.

Once CMCO kicked in, Kwei said the market price for chicken has been slowly recovering, but has not arrived at 100 per cent yet.

Since then, farmers have managed to return to cost price (RM5) and are only making a profit of RM0.30, with market traders buying at RM5.30 per kg.

But Kwei noticed that market traders have increased their prices to about RM9.50 per kg.

“Initially when the cost price dropped to RM2.30, I was told that traders sold at RM7.50 per kg.

“And since we returned to RM5.30, they are selling at RM9.50.

“That is not right,” he said, indicating that if there was a hike in chicken price at the market, broilers farmers should not be blamed.

He therefore urged the government to take action under the Price Control and Anti-Profiteering Act 2011 to prevent traders from making unreasonably high profits.

“It's very unfair for us farmers when we are told to keep our prices low, but traders hike up prices.

“Even if they keep their prices at RM7.50 per kg, they would have profited. Why do they need to sell at RM9.50?

“Obviously consumers will make noise. The government has to do something,” he told *Malay Mail* when contacted.

He also said consumers need not worry too much about prices sky-rocketing during the Hari Raya week as the government will be setting a ceiling price for certain items, placing them under controlled-priced items.

“The government would usually do this during festive seasons and that includes Hari Raya and traders will have to follow this prices set by the government.

“But after this period, what is going happen? The government still needs to keep a close watch, to be fair to all of us including the consumers,” he said.

Yesterday, the Johor Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) launched an investigation on five leading chicken wholesalers in the state in relation to the sudden increase of chicken price in Johor.

On a related call, the Pakatan Harapan secretariat also urged the immediate formation of a mechanism by the government to ensure stable prices of goods and solve persisting issues in the food supply chain.

The secretariat said it was disheartening that the KPDNHEP will only investigate the prices of chicken in several states now when such measures should have been taken earlier and not when it has the potential to burden the people further.

The KPDNHEP is expected to announce controlled-priced items today.

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