

Malaysia Food Bank programme expands with a new distribution centre



Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail (3rd-right) flagging off Malaysia Food Bank programme's lorry during the soft launch of the distribution centre at Bukit Angkat. - Bernama

By Sarah Rahim
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KAJANG: The government's initiative to prevent food waste and provide aid to those in need expanded further with the launch of its first distribution centre under the Malaysia Food Bank programme.

The distribution centre, an initiative by the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)-Graduate School of Business, was undertaken in collaboration with the Malaysia Food Bank Foundation and Legasi Z Sufi Sdn Bhd.

The Food Bank programme is managed by the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry with cooperation from various strategic partners.

Its minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail who was present at the soft launch of the centre at Bukit Angkat here, said that when the ministry started this programme in August 2018, it was looking into having its own distribution centre as one of the components to facilitate achieving the Food Bank's initiative and aim.

^ "This is one of the government's projects that could have a wide-reaching impact with a minimal cost," he said.

"My officers have looked into good practices on similar programme such as the Second Harvest Japan, FoodForward South Africa and those implemented in Singapore, Indonesia and the United Kingdom.

"We did not have a distribution centre when this programme was first introduced."

Saifuddin said now the collection for donation and planning on distribution will be made easier with the new centre, spanning some 1,200 square metres. The distribution centre also has facilities to store perishable items.

"The food items will be shipped out according to batches with categories of those being distributed after storing between 0-3 months or 3-6 months and after six months.

He said among beneficiaries of the programme were those in the People's Housing Project, students of public universities and flood victims.

"Since its inception the programme has benefitted about 480,000 people from targeted households and about 12,000 public university students."

Saifuddin said the food programme now also had its own 14 one-tonne chiller trucks excluding those belonging to its strategic partners including Mutiara Food Bank and Food Aid Foundation.

"In future, we plan to have 123 institutions comprising Polytechnics, Teachers' Training Institutes and private universities to participate in the programme," he said, adding that 430 hotels as of December last year had also joined the programme.

"We also have supermarkets showing interest in the programme," he said.

Saifuddin said at present another distribution centre for the Northern Zone in Bandar Baharu in Kedah was currently being developed.

"It is a strategic location as it is at a Kedah-Penang-Perak border," he said.

"We have identified the warehouse and renovation works are being carried out. It is expected to commence operations by February.

"We hope to have this distribution centre at all zones - East Coast, Central, Northern and Southern Zones."

Saifuddin attributed the progress and expansion of the programme to the government's effort in promulgating the Good Samaritan Bill which seeks to protect contributors to Food Bank programmes. The law was meant to enable the absorption of any risks and liabilities faced by contributors.