

Food Bank saves 650 tonnes of food from wastage



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FOOD Bank Malaysia programme, initiated in August last year as a collection point for sustenance from various sources to be disbursed to the needy, has managed to reduce the wastage of food by 650 tonnes since its inception.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the food that was accrued has reached 238,000 receivers, mainly in the B40 (bottom 40%) household income bracket.

He said the amount to be disbursed is also expected to increase with the availability of 14 new chiller trucks that have been presented to the Malaysia Food Bank Foundation and the ministry's state director.

"For a start, we will hand over the chiller trucks to Selangor, Terengganu, Sabah and Sarawak state directors.

"The trucks will then be used to collect food from the source before they are sent to designated areas for the distribution of food on the same day," he told the press after the handover ceremony of the chiller trucks in Putrajaya yesterday.

Saifuddin Nasution said the trucks are part of the RM3 million allocation channelled by the Finance Ministry.

He said each truck has the capacity to transport one tonne of food per trip and will be used to supply food to the B40 group, as well as 20 public universities.

He added that the extra trucks will also reduce the transportation time from suppliers to receivers on a daily basis.

"We can also cut some layers in the process, including the distribution centres.

“Now, it will be directly sent from the suppliers such as hotels and supermarkets to the receivers at the respective areas immediately,” Saifuddin Nasution said.

Malaysia Food Bank programme was initiated as part of the government's effort to alleviate the cost of living for local consumers, especially households in the B40 group who earn RM1,500 in urban areas and RM1,000 in rural neighbourhoods.

The initiative is also a project aimed at reducing food wastage among Malaysians — a problem which has reached alarming level at 15,000 tonnes of excess food daily with about 3,000 tonnes still in good condition and safe for consumption.

Saifuddin Nasution said two million people can benefit from the project if the 3,000 tonnes of food can be successfully distributed at its optimum.

The pilot project started in Penang last year before it was extended to Kelantan, Melaka, Johor, Perak, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Negri Sembilan.

Food Bank Malaysia programme is under the purview of Malaysia Food Bank Foundation that was set up by the government to ensure a systematic and efficient implementation of the project.

“In the future, the foundation's volunteers will organise and notify the receivers at the determined locations, while the states can concentrate on managing the food supply and distributions,” he said.

Meanwhile, Saifuddin Nasution said the boycott campaigns on certain items or brand, which has been fuelled by certain quarters on social media, is not the determining factors for price changes in the marketplace.

He said any surge or fall of price would totally be decided by the market's supply and demand.

“I was told that the price of cooking oil has decreased. However, the ups and downs of prices will totally be set by market forces. If the price falls at the initial source, the retail price will follow.

“When the demand surges, the price may go up. That's basic economics principle,” Saifuddin Nasution added.