



Achieving Food Security for all Malaysians

by Mr. Lau Heng Kar

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Malaysia is more food secure compared to the past, where all major foods are now available in sufficient quantities to meet the demands of the market. Food access is no longer an issue for most Malaysians, due to better storage systems and distribution arrangements. However, food affordability has still proven to be a significant problem for many. Certain food items, such as beef and milk, have experienced apparent price anomalies. Furthermore, most major food imports have been subject to government regulations which have resulted in oligopolies and related price setting.

Income inequality and related spending patterns has also meant that higher prices have had a more adverse impact on poorer households. Thus, now seems to be a pertinent time to ask what do we mean exactly when we talk about food security for all, and how do we go about achieving it?

In view of this, the IEM Electronic Engineering Technical Division (eETD) organized an online webinar entitled “Achieving Food Security for all Malaysians” on the 8th Oct 2020. Tan Zhai Gen, the Research Manager from the Asia School of Business was invited as the speaker for this event moderated by Lau Heng Kar. Mr Tan graduated from the University of Oxford with a Masters in Biochemistry, his research interests include food security and nutrition. He represents the authors of the “Addressing Malnutrition in Malaysia” co-written with Prof. Dr. Jomo Kwame Sundram and Prof. Wan Manan Wan Muda. The webinar was well received by 23 attendants across various industries.

The webinar started with the introduction of food security that includes food availability, food affordability and food accessibility to the audience.

Addressing Food Security for all Malaysians

Food Security

- **Food Availability:** Enough supply for whole nation
- **Food Affordability:** Households and individuals able to afford food
- **Food Accessibility:** Individuals able to obtain food easily
- **Nutrition:** Households and individuals eating healthily
- **Data misleading:** Undercount foreign labour

One of the highlights from Mr Tan during the webinar was about the nutrition emphasis and food safety. This brought in the interest of audience about local government strategy in this area as well as food security and safety from GMO food which has become a trendy topic in Malaysia. Additionally, the topic of challenges about food availability during Covid-19 and the technology for supply traceability were discussed.

- Advancing Food Security for all Malaysians

Emphasize nutrition, food safety

- Need to move beyond rice self-sufficiency. Ensuring **affordable** healthy diets for good nutrition more urgent, relevant
- Multifaceted policy to ensure **healthy, diversified diets**, good nutrition for all
- Alternative policy options to strengthen both **food security** and **farmer wellbeing**
- **Food safety** should also get due policy considerations, e.g., **agro-chemicals, AMR**
- Careful with **GEOs; seed** regulations

Mr Tan summarized the webinar with the final topic of school feeding program awareness for younger generation. This webinar ended in 2 hours with a great interactive and fruitful discussion session. Highly recommend The IEM Electronic Engineering Technical Division (eETD) to continue organizing such socially impactful webinar to the public.

Solving 3 Problems with One Approach

The **School Feeding Program** can tackle 3 challenges facing society and children:

1. **Ensuring food security**, including food **safety**
2. **Improve nutritional status of the nation**, adequate macro and micronutrient intakes to prevent hunger and "hidden" hunger, stunting, and food related problem such as obesity & NCDs
3. Increase **student academic achievement and equality among school children**