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## Ministry: More focus on oil palm issues

**KUALA LUMPUR (Oct 6): The Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities (MPIC) plans to take more aggressive measures to address palm oil-related issues by formulating plans for the marketing and development of the commodity, said a report on Oct 6 by The Edge Markets.**

Its Minister, Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin, said this was to ensure that the commodity remains competitive in the international market.

The call broadly echoes the founding objectives of POIC Sabah Sdn Bhd whose Lahad Datu palm oil industrial cluster, started in 2005, is to deepen and diversify Sabah's oil palm industry by promoting downstream industries. Sabah produces about 24% of about 19 million metric tons per annum of palm oil in Malaysia. Most of it is exported as crude palm oil.

Touching on the anti-palm oil campaign, she said it had been running for decades and among the

issues being disputed were the health aspect of palm products, environmental impact of oil palm cultivation and, most recently, labour-related issues.

"These issues seem to be raised by the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) on purpose due to market competition and not on facts," she said during the winding-up session for the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP) in Parliament.

She said the ministry's next move is to study and focus marketing efforts in the East, such as China, India, Japan and Uzbekistan, which currently are major importers of CPO.

The Ministry also aims to reduce the pressure from the EU and the US through engagement with the relevant to provide accurate facts to counter the anti palm oil lobby.

Touching on the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) certification scheme, Zuraida said it

was well known that the country's palm oil industry held high standards and its sustainability was being strengthened for the long term.

Most major plantation companies have obtained the certification while about 50% of smallholders remained to be certified.

On labour shortage in the plantation sector, Zuraida said 32,000 foreign workers have been approved to be brought in to plug the shortage.

Labour shortage has affected output. The shortage can potentially cause an estimated loss of RM20 billion.



Datuk Hajah Zuraida Kamaruddin