



'Good money' not enough to lure Malaysians to plantation sector

By **Mohamad Fadli** - March 24, 2021 9:26 AM

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Palm Oil Association (MPOA) has urged Putrajaya to consider hiring new migrant workers as Malaysians have no interest in working in plantations despite being offered good wages.

MPOA chief executive Mohd Nageeb Abdul Wahab said a lot of effort has gone into attracting local workers to join the sector, but with little success.

He told FMT that only about 15% of the current labour force in the plantation sector comprised Malaysians, with migrant workers making up the remainder.

"There was some success, but it's not enough to fully replace migrant workers, especially in harvesting work. If it's possible, in the meantime, relax the regulations for the intake of foreign workers.

"Although the price (of palm oil) is very good, they (farmers) can't benefit from this price because output has dropped by around 20% owing to the lack of labour," he said.

Early last month, plantation industries and commodities minister Khairuddin Aman Razali said the government would consider allowing the intake of migrant workers for the sector, until the Covid-19 situation comes under control.

He said Putrajaya still prioritised the available labour force for the sector and had poured in funds in a bid to replace migrants with local workers.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Shamsuddin Bardan admitted that efforts to attract youths to work in the plantation sector have not yet yielded any success.

He said he was made to understand that there were more than 40,000 job vacancies in the sector, a situation he described as "very concerning".

"We have worked towards attracting local workers, especially youths, to move to the plantation sector, but the response was not good," he told FMT.