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Rice production: Turning idle land into padi fields

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2008/05/06

FROM being a major producer of rice, Malaysia has reached a stage where it has to depend on the whims and fancies of rice-producing countries and rice traders in the region. In the last 20 years, a number of padi fields have been lost to development and neglect.

Many padi fields are held by smallholders and owned by families, many of whose children no longer wish to be associated with padi planting.

It is high time that the rice-planting industry was placed under a developmental agency, as has been done in the case of rubber and oil palm.

Such an agency could develop abandoned land into padi fields. At the same time, we should transform padi cultivation so that rice production can be handled as large-scale operations by big estates.

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