

NST : Labelling food for vegetarians

Written by Administrator

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KUALA LUMPUR: The government will consider a request for packaged vegetarian food to be accordingly labelled as being "suitable for vegetarians" for the benefit of the public.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Deputy Minister Datuk S.Veerasingam has called on the Malaysian Vegetarian Society (MVS) to submit a memorandum on this matter in view of the increasing number of Malaysians as well as tourists who are vegetarian.

He said this after launching the "Vege for Health" Congress organised by MVS at the Putra World Trade Centre on Friday.

The two-day event included presentations on the issues surrounding vegetarianism by independent experts as well as representatives from the International Vegetarian Union, Indonesia Vegetarian Society and the Vegetarian Society of Singapore.

He said that there is currently no certification programme for vegetarian food products by the government. So the onus is now on food companies to indicate if their products are vegetarian.

Consumers and the ministry can take legal action against companies that provide erroneous details of the products.

"The legal responsibility of a food product's content as stipulated on its packaging is with the food company."

He said that children and society in general should be made aware that at least 70 per cent of the human diet should comprise vegetables for health purposes.

MVS president Dr Kamalanathan Sappani said many countries had adopted the label of the green dot to indicate that food within a package is vegetarian.

He stressed that there are now more than a billion vegetarians around the world and Malaysia should adopt the label as more foreign travellers are now visiting the country.

The MVS will also work to start vegetarian clubs in 12 schools and 12 colleges throughout the country next year to promote the health benefits of a green diet.