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PUTRAJAYA: The Government has urged consumers to report traders and wholesalers selling general-purpose wheat flour above the controlled price.

Deputy Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk S. Veerasingam said the ministry could only act against those who charged more for this type of wheat flour.

Prices of all other flour, including the enriched wheat flour, are not controlled.

The pricing of these types of flour are subject to global market forces or supply and demand, he explained.

He was responding to claims from traders and restaurant proprietors in several parts of the country that prices of all types of flour have increased since early this week, including the price-controlled wheat flour.

General-purpose wheat flour is fixed at RM1.35 per kilo following the 15 sen increase approved by the Government in May, which was the first increase in a decade.

Veerasingam said the ministry could not restrict millers or traders from increasing prices of all other types of flour.

He said the ministry was aware that there was a global shortage of wheat grain and flour due to Australia's low wheat output.

The lifting of farmers' subsidies by Western countries to create a fair playing field and the use of grains to produce biofuel have also pushed up production cost and prices of grains in the global market, he added.

S. Selvam, 41, who operates four restaurants in the Klang Valley, said several wholesalers had raised the price of general-purpose wheat flour to RM1.60 per kilo.

I used to buy a 25kg sack of general-purpose wheat flour for RM33 before Hari Raya, but now the same wholesaler is charging me RM40, he pointed out, adding that the price of other flour like *atta* (used to make *chapati*) had also increased by 25 sen per 450gm bag (from RM1.25 to RM1.50).

Another trader in Teluk Intan, Perak, said that the popular *atta* and *rava* (semolina) flour had gone up since early this week.

He said *atta* flour had gone up by 85 sen per kilo and *rava* by RM1 per kilo.

Both flours are popular among Indians who will celebrate Deepavali on Nov 8.

On Oct 10, Flour Millers Association of Malaysia chairman Teh Wee Chye said there would be shortage of wheat flour in November, as the industry was reaching a critical stage and needed to replenish stocks.

Malaysia is said to be Southeast Asia's second-biggest flour consumer.