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◆PUTRAJAYA: Vegetables at the Selayang wholesale market tainted by pesticides?

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Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek is surprised that the Institute for Medical Research (IMR) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) have arrived at this conclusion using limited sampling. "I am very upset that they used limited samplings (93) to conclude their research. "They should have discussed the findings with us before making it public, even though the outcome may reward them with a Nobel Prize," he said before meeting specialists and doctors of private hospitals in his office yesterday. Dr Chua said any study, for that matter, should not be conducted using limited samples.

"The findings should have been analysed first before any announcement was made. "We have been monitoring the pesticide level constantly and our samples run into thousands, not just 93." Last year, only two of 427 samples of fruits tested were found to be tainted while only 29 from 1,766 samples of vegetables, were found to have flouted the Food Regulations 1985. Pahang topped the list of non-compliance (4.6 per cent), followed by Johor and Negri Sembilan (2.3 per cent), Perak (two per cent), Penang and Sabah (1.7 per cent), and Selangor (1.3 per cent). Dr Chua said the abuse of pesticides by farmers was under control. "We will continue to monitor and conduct random checks to ensure pesticide levels are under the permissible level. We will intensify co-operation with the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry to ensure good and ethical methods among our farmers. He advised consumers to wash vegetables and fruits first before eating them. The New Straits Times had, among other things, highlighted findings that high levels of pesticide residue had been found on vegetables sold at the Selayang wholesale market in Kuala Lumpur. It was reported that two-thirds of the 93 samples of six popular greens were found to be contaminated with at least one kind of pesticide. Some of the contaminated vegetables were spinach, kangkung, round cabbage and Chinese mustard. The Selayang market supplies vegetables to about three-quarters of the hypermarkets, wet markets, night markets and grocery stores in Selangor.