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## **Fadillah: The total export of the plantation industry reached RM160.6 billion**

(Putrajaya, 15th Bernama News) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Plantation and Original Industry Dato Sri Fadillah said that the plantation and original industry contributed RM61.3 billion to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as of the third quarter of this year, and exports The total amounted to RM160.6 billion and provided employment opportunities for nearly one million people, especially in the upstream sector.

He said he would meet with industry players next week to discuss matters across the supply chain, including exports.

"One of the challenges is over-reliance on foreign labour, coupled with labor shortages that will affect harvests, lower production will also affect exports."

"All issues will be identified and then there will be consultations with relevant departments such as the Ministry of Human Resources and Foreign Affairs on how to formulate a strategy so that production, export markets and downstream outcomes can be seen."

Fadillah was speaking to reporters after attending the graduation ceremony of the Malaysian Plantation and Commodities Academy (IMPAC) here today.

He said the government realized that continuing to rely on foreign labor was not a long-term solution and would be detrimental to the plantation industry, especially the palm oil industry.

"As of October 30 this year, it was reported that there were 150,608 foreign workers engaged in the plantation industry. In view of this, the government encourages the industry, including small farmers, to expand the use of machinery."

He suggested holding more short-term or long-term courses to improve the knowledge and skills in the use of machinery, so as to ensure that the utilization rate of machinery in plantations can reach the optimum level while increasing productivity and reducing dependence on foreign labor.

In addition, he said, the mastery of technologies based on Industrial Revolution 4.0 and expertise in specific fields are key indicators for the industry, especially for young people who are trained in the field of cultivation and production, so that they can ensure that the skills they have are kept up to date. on current technological developments.

"Technology adoption can also produce savvy smallholders who will practice modern farming methods through the use of advanced technology, innovation and increase the competitiveness of indigenous entrepreneurs in downstream industries."

Fadilla said that technical and vocational education (TVET) needs to be strengthened by working with stakeholders to improve the ecosystem and be certified by international accreditation bodies to enhance the competitiveness of the country's plantation and raw industries.

"Strengthening the ecosystem of skilled workers in the cultivation and production sector will allow the country to address unresolved issues such as dependence on foreign labour. This initiative will create a flexible labor market, which in turn will improve the standard of living of the people."