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TANJONG KARANG: Felcra Berhad participants throughout the country will be involved in the Beyond Benih programme, a British American Tobacco Malaysia Bhd (BAT Malaysia) community garden programme in an effort to ensure food security and reduce the country's dependence on imports.

The programme aims to encourage communities to plant various selected vegetables according to good agricultural practices and to sell the produce at subsidised prices.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the programme will be able to be

scaled up with the cooperation of Felcra Berhad.

"This is because Felcra has 230,000 hectares of land, including plantations, estates, padi fields and fallow land, throughout the country.

"We must do it on a large scale to reduce our dependence on imports, ensure food security and it must be done holistically," he said during a media conference after launching the national-level programme here yesterday.

"We import more than RM60 billion worth of food products annually, it's a huge amount.

"That's why, besides the Veterinary Department and

the cooperation of agencies like Felcra and the Rubber Industry Smallholders' Development

Authority (Risda), we breed cattle, goats and chickens to be sold.

"Settlers, smallholders, Felcra participants and villagers are also involved. The thing is that we do it on a small scale, so it must be done on a larger scale to reduce dependence on imports," he said, adding that this programme would help create agricultural communities that could achieve food self-sufficiency.

Currently there are two community gardens, in Shah Alam and Tanjong Karang, under the programme. — Bernama



Zahid at the launch of the Beyond Benih Programme in Tanjong Karang on Friday. — Bernama photo