

Malaysians Must Stop Getting Hooked On Cooking Oil, Like They Already Are With Sugar

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Following the implementation of cooking oil rationalisation, social media has been abuzz with speculations surrounding the government's intent to raise the price of sugar – that's currently sold at RM2.84 per kg – come December 1.

Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin, Minister of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism (KPDNKK), has however clarified that there will be no rise in the commodity prices, despite a request from producers to raise the price of the goods.

He added that the sugar price depends on the price of raw sugar in the global market, that was last surveyed about four years ago, *Bemama* reports.

Yesterday MSM Malaysia Holdings Bhd (MSM), Malaysia's leading sugar refiner, said that it will not raise its prices despite the increase of the commodity price in the world market.

Felda Group chairman Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad, meanwhile stated that this move is in accordance to the government's instruction as sugar is categorised as a controlled item, he said, quoting *Berita Harian*.

He continued to share that producing 90,000 metric tonnes of sugar per month is enough to sustain the whole of Malaysia, in comparison with the 85,000 metric tonnes of cooking oil the government produces per month but remains insufficient due to the smuggling activities and hoarding by sundry shops.

Whereas according to the ministry's calculation, 45,000 metric tonnes of cooking oil is enough to sustain 30 million citizens on a monthly basis, and the excess subsidies has caused the government to lose RM540 million a year.

For this very reason, the Cooking Oil Price Stabilisation Scheme (COSS) had to be implemented; to ensure the targeted groups enjoy the government's subsidy.

Though there have been endless complains that only the 1kg polybag cooking oil packages remain subsidised by the government, nevertheless, from a health perspective, the scheme is seen as a good move in helping consumers control their daily oil intake.

Despite this, consumers have failed to view this account in a positive light as many choose to be fixated on the issue surrounding the price increase.

The same can be said about sugar – whereby many are aware of the risks of excessive sugar intake daily in food and beverage, which may lead to health issues like diabetes.

Earlier this month, the 2015 National Health and Morbidity Survey found 3.5 million or 17.5 per cent of the country's 18-year-olds or above are diagnosed with diabetes due to lifestyle, of which 70 per cent suffer from Type 2 diabetes.

Moreover, the Health Ministry had previously predicted 2.5 million Malaysians will be diagnosed with diabetes by 2030, and as a result, health campaigns urging the public to reduce their sugar consumption were intensified.

Now, if Malaysians can acknowledge that excessive sugar intake is harmful to their health, when it comes to matters concerning the consumption of cooking oil, why is it so difficult for them to accept the fact that similarly, excessive consumption of cooking oil too could pose health risks?

Based on the same survey, results showed that 17.7 per cent of Malaysians are obese, while 30 per cent are categorised as overweight – which equates to almost half of the country's total 30 million population.

In fact, an individual should only consume 600grams of cooking oil per month, as recommended by a local dietitian. Otherwise, excess consumption will lead to unwanted effects like weight gain, obesity and heart diseases.

Separately, an article published in 2014 by the [Consumers Association of Penang \(CAP\)](#) revealed that Malaysians consume 26 teaspoons of sugar per day, making us the eighth largest consumers of sugar in the world.

Doesn't this already paint the picture that we Malaysians cannot live without sugar? And now, what next with consumers finding it difficult to cut down their consumption of cooking oil, despite the shared guidelines provided by nutritionists and the government in an effort to protect our health?

Excessive sugar and cooking oil intake both lead to negative outcomes for our health. So, why can't this rationalisation be viewed as a measure taken to help consumers reduce their usage of cooking oil daily, subsequently reducing the cost of their monthly expenses?

Enough already with Malaysians getting hooked on sugar, let's not get hooked on cooking oil too.

- *Malaysian Digest*