

Veg and fish prices hit by the rains

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Supply down by as much as 50% due to continuous bad weather

PETALING JAYA: The continuous rain around the country has clogged up the supply of vegetables and fish in the markets, causing a hike in prices.

The monsoon season and rough seas has taken a toll on fish supply by at least 50%, said North Kuala Terengganu Fishermen Association chairman Jaafar @ A. Rahman Abu Bakar.

He said among the fishes in short supply were local favourites like mackerel (ikan kembung), ikan selayang, and ikan selar kuning.

However the prices, according to A. Rahman, have not skyrocketed but there has been an increase of between RM2 and RM3 per kilo.

"The prices have not gone up so high. On normal days, ikan kembung cost about RM7 or RM8 per kilo, now it is about RM9 or RM10 per kilo," he said.

He said it was hard to determine how much fishermen can catch as it fluctuated due to bad weather.

The prices, said A. Rahman, also fluctuated according to the places.

Previously, A. Rahman said, fishermen usually caught 1,000kg of fish in six days.

Sungai Besar Fishermen Association secretary Ji Wei Chen said that while there was an adequate supply of fish, the prices have increased by 20%.

"It also depends on market demand. Sometimes, bawal (pomfret) and big prawns are sent to countries like Singapore," he said.

Another problem, he said, was the lack of manpower.

A shortage of foreign workers means fewer boats go out to sea.

"This year, there seems to be a good supply of ikan kembung and cencaru but there aren't enough fishermen to catch them," he added.

The monsoon season has also caused a shortfall of 20% to 30% in vegetables, especially leafy ones, said the Federation of Malaysian Vegetable Farmers Association president Tan So Tiok.

The prices of some Malaysian favourites such as sawi, bayam, kangkung and kailan are among



It's getting pricier: Fish and vegetables are now more expensive at the SS2 night market in Petaling Jaya.

those affected.

"The prices for these leafy vegetables have gone up between 20% to 100%.

"If before, some of them cost RM2 per kilo, they now cost around RM4 or more per kilo. It also depends on the type of vegetables," said Tan when contacted.

He said the prices of other vegetables such as long beans and cucumber have also increased.

In GEORGE TOWN, housewife M. Leela, 44, said local cucumbers were now being sold at RM3.39 per kilo at a hypermarket near Air Itam.

"This is shocking. The last time I went marketing, it was 99 sen a kilo," she said.

A spokesman for the hypermar-

ket said suppliers were selling at higher prices following the rainy spell.

Cameron Highlands Vegetable Growers Association secretary Chay Ee Mong said prices of lowland vegetables such as spinach, Chinese celery and cabbages were up by between 20% and 50%.

He also said production in his area had seen a drop of at least 20% due to the rain and lack of sunshine.

The volume of vegetables being imported from countries such as China is also low, adding it has become more expensive to import due to the ringgit's slide.

"Also the rainy season means we have to be careful about the quality.

"These are perishable goods so

cannot be kept for too long," he added.

Checks by *The Star* at a local pasar malam showed prices of vegetables and fish fluctuating.

While there were many increases, prices of some of these produce remained unchanged and surprisingly, the price of kangkung had fallen from RM4 per kilo last week to RM3.50 this week.

Consumers Association of Penang education officer N.V. Subarrow said there had been many complaints from the public.

"The price hike always happens towards the end of the year.

"It is not true that the rainy spell has affected the vegetable output," he said.