

Belgium: No restrictions on palm oil

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by neville spykerman

KUALA LUMPUR: Belgium imposes no restrictions on Malaysian palm oil imports because production of the commodity is sustainable, said its Deputy Prime Minister Didier Reynders (*pic*).

He said while it was not in the Belgian government's role to promote any product, the country's consumers would be informed about the good social practices of the palm oil industry in Malaysia.

"We can explain in Europe and Belgium that here in Malaysia, there are very sustainable practices with good social conditions for workers along with hospitals and schools for children in the rural areas," he said after delivering a lecture on moderation at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations here yesterday.

Reynders, who is part of an economic delegation visiting Malaysia, said members had held discussions about the industry with the authorities here as well as visited some companies.

Some companies in Belgium had claimed that Malaysia's palm oil industry had led to deforestation and reportedly launched a campaign called "Without Palm Oil", which saw a label with this statement being placed on various food products.

However, Reynders denied that there was an anti-palm oil campaign in either Europe or Belgium.

"In Europe, the rules are that we provide all information about all the different vegetable oils and fats to consumers," he said.

This, he said, was similar to the Malaysia Government's move to provide information to consumers about sugar and its connection to obesity.

Reynders said this was done in Europe with many products and not to paint a negative picture, adding that it aimed to give all consumers enough information.

"We import a lot of palm oil and we have a lot of Belgium companies working here in this sector along with other European companies," he said.