

Malaysia Adopts Plan for Food Self-Sufficiency

by Michael Billington

Last week's *EIR* (Aug. 2, 2002) ran an exclusive interview with scientist Mohd Peter Davis from Malaysia, regarding his proposal to the Malaysian government, first presented in March of this year to a Bio-Industry Forum, for an ambitious transformation of the nation's agricultural program to achieve food self-sufficiency in the face of a collapsing world economy. On July 28, the Malaysian government announced that it will, indeed, transform the system along these lines.

After encouraging prospective graduates for years to pursue information technology and business degrees, the government has decided that it needs agricultural graduates, with a plan to make the country a net food exporter in eight years.

Agriculture Minister Effendi Norwawi said that a new agriculture college would be set up to educate a new breed of farmers and professionals, who will help modernize the agriculture sector and raise food production. He said that the establishment of the college had been approved by the Cabinet the week of July 29.

The government has set a target for the country to produce 81.5 billion ringgit (\$37.4 billion) worth of food in the next five years. Agriculture Minister Effendi said that the federal government would work with Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), which is where Davis teaches and does his research,



Widely introducing cultivation of the sweet potato was one key strategy in the national food plan presented in March: to produce a carbohydrate-sufficient diet not dependent on imports; and to build national production of livestock in the tropics where maize can't be grown.



*The Malaysian government has just announced that it will transform its national food/agricultural policy, along lines similar to the proposals described by Mohd Peter Davis in *EIR* last week. Here, Davis presents the proposals in March at a Kuala Lumpur bio-industry conference.*

to ensure that the college achieves its objectives. "An estimated 30,000 technically skilled people and some 10,000 professionals are needed for the sector in the next seven years," Effendi said.

Davis' original proposal, co-signed by UPM's Deputy Vice Chancellor Makhdzir Madan, was titled "Food Production for Malaysia During a Collapsing World Economy." It drew on the economic forecast of the unfolding world depression by *EIR*'s founder, Lyndon LaRouche, warning that Malaysia, like all countries today, could suddenly find itself cut off from normal access to imported food supplies—not unlike what happened under the Japanese occupation during World War II. To meet that potentiality, he proposed specific measures, including: building up meat production increasing rice production from the current 70% to 100% of domestic requirements, assuring nutrition for children, the introduction of the sweet potato as a uniquely appropriate new source of carbohydrates for Malaysian conditions, and the implementation of the necessary education and research facilities to achieve those results.

In the *EIR* interview, Davis pointed out that Malaysia's official policy called for food self-sufficiency, but that the programs to achieve self-sufficiency were never implemented. The new program announced by Minister Effendi is a major step in that direction. Reached for comment by *EIR*, Davis was delighted that the nation is responding to the crisis, not by hoping that the economic crisis will go away, but by preparing to provide for the general welfare in any eventuality.