

Mystery of missing rice

Written by 3K Admin

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THE rice supply chain is broken and it's hurting the lower-income homes.

Because there is a severe shortage of Super Special Tempatan 15 per cent broken rice (SST15).

The grade, the cheapest when available, has almost completely disappeared from the shelves of many sundry shops and even hypermarkets.

It started a few months ago, but the persistent difficulty in getting the rice has reached its height with many retailers now having to bear the brunt of frustrated customers.

Besieged by complaints from irate consumers, Malay Mail went to the ground and discovered it to be true (see accompanying story).

Retailers who actually get supply - but apparently not enough of it - claim the rice is snapped up "almost instantly". Efforts to get rice distributors, including Padibernas Nasional Berhad (Bernas), to comment proved futile.

Strangely enough, the authorities have not announced any shortage of the grade.

Sources familiar with the industry said the authorities should immediately look into the possibility

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that the producers were under-producing the grade.

"It is cheaper to channel the broken rice from the milling process to produce meehoon as it is more profitable," said a source.

"Besides, there is no minimum production quota for the SST15 production and it is a loophole that producers could be exploiting. By producing less, consumers have no choice but to buy the more expensive grades. This, in turn, could be shown to mean there's lesser demand for SST15 rice."

Consumer Association of Subang and Shah Alam, Selangor (CASSA) president Jacob George said the association was aware that there is an acute shortage of broken rice in the market.

"Even sundry shops tend to only stock between five and seven bags whenever supply is available and these are snapped up quickly," he said.

George said the authorities should investigate if hoarding, or even the possibility of the grade being smuggled out, by profiteers is a cause.

"We have repeatedly suggested that the government set up an audit committee comprising members from ministries related to consumer products to monitor the supply chain of the government's subsidised products," he said.

"However, this suggestion has not been taken up. As a result, you get situations like this."

Source: <http://www.mmail.com.my/content/mystery-missing-rice>