

Padi farmers lose RM150,000 to worm attack

ALOR STAR: Some 100 farmers in the Kubang Pasu district, near here, suffered around RM150,000 in losses when their 200ha padi fields were “terrorised” by *ulat ratus* (lawn armyworm).

The farmers said they were helpless when it came to protecting their crop from being eaten by the worm, scientifically known as *spodoptera mauritia*.

Abdul Ghani Saad, 67, of Kampung Pulau Pisang in Jitra, said his 3.7ha padi field was overrun by the worms about a month ago.

“Usually, I can get around RM24,000 per season from the harvest, but this time, it dropped to only RM20,000.

“We must do something about this problem as it not only affects our income, but also food supply.”

Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Mohd Johari Baharom, who met with the farmers in Kampung Pulau Pisang, assured them of assistance from the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (Mada).

“I have asked Mada to prepare a report on the pest attack and the losses suffered by padi farmers.

“The ministry will submit the report to the National Security Council for financial assistance for the affected farmers.

Johari said *ulat ratus* was a moth which fed on various types of grass.

It can lay some 300 eggs at a time, which would transform from caterpillars to moths.

He said the padi farmers could control the outbreak by using pesticides.



Farmer **Shaarani Man**, 65, showing the *ulat ratus* that eat their crops in Kampung Pulau Pisang in Jitra yesterday. Pic by Shahrizal Md Noor