

Agriculture Seminar another success

The 9th series of the Agriculture Technology Seminar entitled "Linking Agriculture and Food Science" was successfully held at the Faculty of Science, UTAR Perak Campus on 31 May 2014.

Organised by the Centre for Biodiversity Research, the Kuala Lumpur Kepong (KLK) Berhad-sponsored seminar once again became a platform where more than 100 participants enriched themselves with input of agriculture and food science knowledge from an array of seasoned speakers. The speakers included KLK Berhad Regional Director (Peninsular Malaysia) Teh Sar Moh Nee, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Food Science Department Prof Dr Aminah binti Abdullah and Prof Dr Abdul Salam bin Babji, Ayamas Food Corporation Sdn Bhd President Dr Kooi Eng Teong, Universiti Sains Malaysia Dean of School of Industrial Technology Prof Dr Azhar Mat Easa and Nestle Manufacturing (M) Sdn Bhd Agricultural Services Officer Chong Chin Yin.

"The theme of the seminar this time is timely as we just inaugurated our Food Science programme last week," said Chairperson of UTAR Centre for Biodiversity Research Assoc Prof Dr Say Yee How, who also extended his warm welcome to all guests and thanked the organising committee for making this seminar a success.



Dr Say addressing the audience

UTAR Vice President (R&D and Commercialisation) Prof Ir Dr Lee Sze Wei in his welcoming address, expressed his delight to be present at the successful seminar once again. "As a layman in agriculture, it interests me to know the future of food supply, the safety of food and its sustainability," he continued.



Prof Lee delivering his welcome remarks

Teh, the first speaker, shared with the audience the bountiful benefits of palm oil through his presentation entitled "The Palm Oil Industry - Nature's Best Kept Secret?". "Palm oil is a top-selling vegetable oil in the world and contains the highest percentage of tocotrienols which are members of the vitamin E family and considered an essential nutrient for the body. A two-year study has also discovered that vitamin E from Malaysian palm oil can protect the white matters in our brains," he said.

"Is Sensory Evaluation Necessary in Food Product Development" was the following topic presented by Prof Aminah. She highlighted the sensory evaluation conducted by food industries, research institutes and local institutions of higher learning, which also included problems associated when conducting sensory evaluation. "The sensory research in Malaysia is still at an infant stage but our government has realised the importance of sensory evaluation for food industries and subsequently developed several standards related to sensory evaluation based on the International Organisation of Standards so as to be on par with developed countries."

This was followed by Prof Abdul Salam's "R&D and Food Product Development from Meat, Poultry and Fish Supply Chain Management throughout Upstream and Downstream Processing" which enabled the audience to understand the challenges faced by meat processors and technologists. "The challenges include the search for consistent supply of raw materials and making sure that the quality and safety of the final products are made available to consumers. Traceability of food additives used in the meat processing industry is still a major obstacle for different religious communities looking for safe and wholesome food," he shared.

In Dr Kooi's "Poultry Integration: From Farm to Fork" presentation, the participants learnt about Ayamas Food Corporation Sdn Bhd's pivotal role as the country's biggest integrated poultry operators through supplying halal chicken meat to fast food chains such as KFC, Pizza Hut and to other domestic market as well as export markets such as Singapore, Bangladesh, Brunei, Hong Kong and Mauritius. "In Ayamas, there is also poultry breeding, hatchery, feed mill, poultry farming, contract broiler farming and processing. Such integrated production and supply chain is an advantage to Ayamas and its consumers because every process is fully controlled to ensure the safety and quality of the products." Prof Azhar's "Innovation in Food Sciences = Wealth Creation in Agriculture" illustrated the properties of *ulam* and Ulam Raja Extract (UREX). According to him, UREX is a potent natural antioxidant that can be used to improve the shelf life of meat products against lipid and protein oxidation. "Traditionally, the Malays have been eating fresh *ulam* as salad. Although the shift in eating pattern of consumers today makes it less convenient for them to regularly consume *ulam*, UREX, in future, can be produced as capsules or combined with other fruits or extracts rich in antioxidants for various commercial purposes," he summarised.

"Since 2001, Nestle has extended agricultural activities to include sustainability practices, as exemplified by the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative- Nestle (SAI-N). Nestle now emphasises on social and environment factors in the way agricultural activities are conducted," shared Chong during his "Sustainable Agriculture Initiatives - Nestle" presentation. The Agriculture Services Officer also elaborated the background and rationale of both SAI-N and CSV (Creating Shared Value), a term coined by Nestle which means benefitting all parties in Nestle's supply chain through true sustainability. Year Two Agriculture student Muhd Ihsan bin Firman said that the seminar has helped him in his studies and also in writing reports. "I have been attending the seminar since my first year. All of these seminar series allow me to understand the industry better and even enable me to think deeper about certain pressing issues. Milk production in Malaysia is one of them," said the 24-year-old from Malacca, who also aspires to open his farm one day.

While giving the closing remark, Dean of Faculty of Science Assoc Prof Dr Lim Tuck Meng expressed his joy over the success of this seminar which is now held for the ninth time since its debut in 2010. He also mentioned that the faculty has reached another milestone by inaugurating the Food Science programme recently. "Hopefully this seminar will be a continuing success with even more speakers coming to share their findings with our students from the Agricultural Science and Food Science programmes," he concluded



Dr Lim delivering his closing remarks



The speakers receiving tokens of appreciations - (clockwise from top left) Teh receiving a token from Dr Lim (right), Prof Aminah receiving a token from Dr Say (right), Prof Abdul Salam, Dr Kooi, Prof Azhar and Chong accepting the tokens from Dr Lim.