



**LAPORAN LIPUTAN MEDIA HARIAN
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UKKMOA

UNIT KOMUNIKASI KORPORAT
KEMENTERIAN PERTANIAN & INDUSTRI ASAS TANI
(UNTUK EDARAN DALAMAN MOA, JABATAN DAN AGENSI SAHAJA)

TARIKH	MEDIA	RUANGAN	MUKA SURAT
9/9/2019	SINAR HARIAN	SINAR SELATAN	37

Jabatan Perikanan saran rawat air elak ikan mati

JOHOR BAHRU - Jabatan Perikanan Negeri Johor mencadangkan kaedah pertukaran dan rawatan air dilakukan bagi mengatasi masalah ammonia sebagai usaha pemulihan segera.

Cadangan itu berikutan ribuan ikan mati di Pantai Lido tiga hari lalu.

Pengarahnya, Zamani Omar berkata, air kolam perlu dirawat sebelum dilepaskan ke perairan umum.

Menurutnya, pembinaan sistem pengairan perlu bagi memastikan air dapat mengalir keluar dan masuk mengikut keadaan pasang surut air laut.

"Ini bagi memastikan sisa domestik tidak berkumpul setempat sehingga menjejaskan kualiti air.

"Difahamkan setakat ini hanya satu laluan bagi tujuan tersebut berbanding keluasan

keseluruhan kawasan," katanya dalam satu kenyataan semalam.

Zamani berkata, berdasarkan laporan analisis kualiti air yang dihantar pada 28 Ogos lepas, kandungan ammonia dan fosfat di kawasan itu adalah tinggi.

"Ia dipercayai berpunca daripada proses pereputan bangkai ikan.

"Keadaan lebih buruk jika saluran air buangan sisa domestik mengalir ke kawasan takungan tersebut kerana mengancam hidupan akuatik lain," katanya.

Terdahulu, *Sinar Harian* melaporkan lambakan ikan mati di perairan Pantai Lido tetapi disahkan tidak membatikan sebarang pembuangan sisa daripada sumber industri atau kumbahan sebaliknya kesan perubahan ekosistem di perairan itu.

Perubahan ekosistem punca ikan mati

PASIR GUDANG 8 Sept. - Kematian ribuan ikan di tali air berdekatan Hospital Sultanah Aminah (HSA) dan Pantai Lido di Johor Bahru pada 28 Ogos dan 6 September lalu dipercayai berpunca keadaan persekitaran kawasan perairan serta perubahan ekosistem.

Walau bagaimanapun, Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Kerajaan Tempatan, Ke-sejahteraan Bandar dan Alam Sekitar negeri, Tan Chen Choon berkata, pihaknya masih menunggu laporan lengkap Jabatan Alam Sekitar (JAS) dan Jabatan Perikanan negeri sebelum sebarang tindakan lanjut diambil.

Menurutnya, operasi pembersihan melibatkan pelbagai agensi termasuk pihak berkuasa tempatan dan jabatan perikanan telah dilakukan.

"Masalahnya ialah kematian ikan disebabkan paras oksigen terlarut sangat rendah iaitu 1.2ppm dan ia tidak sesuai untuk hidupan ikan kerana untuk ikan mesti sekurang-kurangnya 5ppm," katanya selepas Majlis Apresiasi Jawatankuasa Pengurusan Bencana Negeri Johor di Menara Aqabah di sini hari



TAN CHEN CHOON

ini.

Majlis tersebut disempurnakan Menteri Besar, Datuk Dr. Sahrudin Jamal.

Pada 28 Ogos lalu, lambakan bangkai ikan ditemukan di kawasan Pantai Lido di HSA sebelum kes sama berulang pada Jumaat lalu.

Sementara itu, Pengarah Perikanan Johor, Zamani Omar berkata, analisis awal mendapati kandungan ammonia dan fosfat di kawasan perairan itu sangat tinggi disebabkan proses pereputan bangkai ikan.

Beliau berkata, antara cadangan awal bagi pemuliharaan kandungan ammonia itu adalah dengan merawat air takungan sebelum dilepaskan ke perairan.

Dept: Treat stagnant Pantai Lido waters

JOHOR BARU: The state Fisheries Department has suggested that stagnant waters where dead fish were found in two separate incidents along Pantai Lido be treated.

Its director Zamani Omar said water analysis, which was carried out following the first incident, found high amount of ammonia and phosphate believed to be from decaying fish.

It would get worse if domestic wastewater flowed into the affected area, threatening other aquatic life, he said.

The department suggested the ammonia problem be tackled by treating the stagnant water before releasing it into the sea, he said in a statement here yesterday.

For the long term, Zamani said more efficient irrigation channels should be constructed at Pantai Lido to ensure that water flows in

and out according to the tide.

He said this would ensure that domestic waste did not accumulate and affect the water quality.

Zamani said currently, there was only one channel that was built for such purpose.

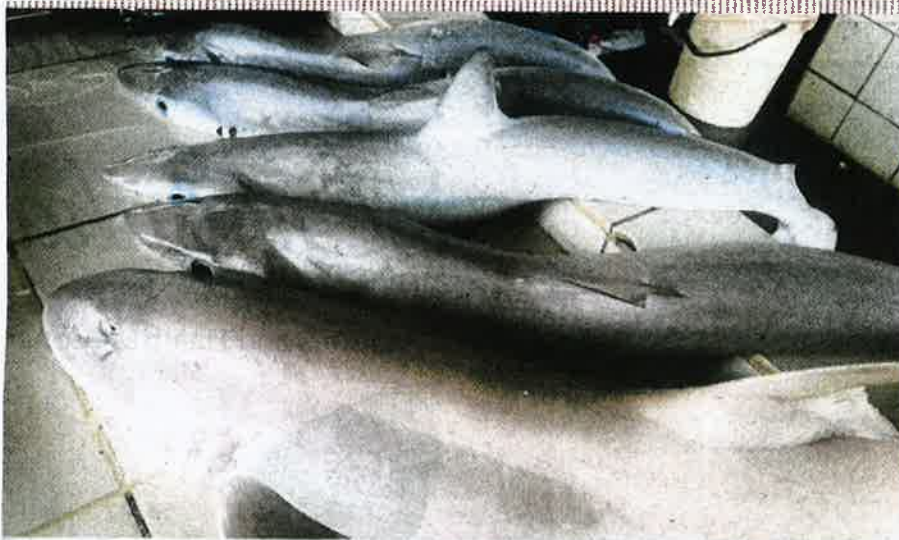
It was reported that the state government was looking into ways to improve development procedures at Pantai Lido following mass fish death in the area.

Mentri Besar Datuk Dr Sahrudin Jamal had said relevant agencies were still investigating development projects, including reclamation works.

He said that if the incident had something to do with the development projects, the state government would consult relevant agencies, including DOE and Town and Country Planning Department, to look into it.



Cause for concern: Dead fish found along Pantai Lido near Sultanah Aminah Hospital in Johor Baru recently.



Sharks being sold at the wet market in Kota Kinabalu recently. PIC BY MALAI RDSMAH TUAH

STAPLE FOOD

HIGH DEMAND HAMPERS SHARK, RAY PROTECTION

Despite a ban, fishermen continue to catch the species in Sabah waters

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SABAH is keen to protect shark and ray species in its waters, but the fact that these marine life is staple food for some locals poses a problem.

A fishmonger, who has been operating at the wet market here for the past 35 years, said high demand from consumers was the reason fishermen continued to catch the species.

"I am aware of the ban on fishing for sharks and rays to prevent the species from going extinct. But some people in Sabah, including the fishermen, consume their meat," he said, adding that sharks and rays were sold for be-

tween RM8 and RM12 per kg.

The fisherman, who declined to be named, said fewer sharks and rays were caught these days compared with three decades ago.

"I used to sell at least a tonne of guitar and hammerhead sharks a week. I remember the biggest shark weighed about 200kg. Now, the most I get from the suppliers is 70kg, twice or thrice a week."

He said he received his supply from fishermen operating in the west-coast waters of Sabah.

A buyer, who wanted to be known only as Hassan, said he consumed shark meat once a month to "cleanse the lymphatic system".

At the recent Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species conference, Malaysia, along with 40 other countries, opposed a proposal to protect certain species of sharks and rays from exploitation.

The Fisheries Department defended the vote on the basis that sharks and rays were by-catches.

Shark experts have said fishing activities do not contribute to a decline in their populations.

However, the federal government had, in July, gazetted four species of sharks and two species of rays as endangered under the newly amended Fisheries (Control of Endangered Species of Fish Amendment) Regulations 2019.

The newly listed species under the shark group are *sphyrna mokarran* (great hammerhead), *sphyrna zygaena* (smooth hammerhead), *eusphyrna blochii* (winghead) and *carcharhinus longimanus* (oceanic whitetip).

The species listed under the ray group are *manta birostris* (oceanic manta) and *manta alfredi* (reef manta).

Sabah Food and Agriculture Industry Minister Datuk Junz Wong was reported as saying that in recent years, restaurants in the state had stopped serving shark fin due to better awareness of conservation.

Sabah, however, will enhance the protection of sharks and rays through the amendment of the State Fisheries Enactment and ban trawlers for a more sustainable marine stock in its waters.

TARIKH	MEDIA	RUANGAN	MUKA SURAT
9/9/2019	BERITA HARIAN	NASIONAL	41

LKIM agih RM211,000 baik pulih rumah nelayan terjejas taufan

Sungai Petani: Lembaga Kemajuan Ikan Malaysia (LKIM) mengagihkan sebanyak RM211,000 untuk kerja membaik pulih rumah nelayan yang terjejas akibat tempas ribut Taufan Lekima bulan lalu.

Pengerusinya, Muhammad Faiz Fadzil, berkata sumbangan di bawah Skim Bencana Alam dan Kebajikan itu membabitkan 188 ahli persatuan nelayan di Perlis, Kedah dan Pulau Pinang.

"Kita mengenal pasti ahli persatuan nelayan yang terjejas akibat bencana alam ini di tiga negeri ini sahaja.

"Pengagihan bantuan bermula sejak bulan lalu dan dijangka selesai dalam masa terdekat," katanya selepas mengadakan lawatan ke rumah mangsa ribut di Tanjung Dawai, di sini, semalam.

Muhammad Faiz berkata, jumlah bantuan itu membabitkan RM50,000 bagi membaik pulih 19 rumah di Perlis, RM87,000 bagi 79 rumah di Kedah dan RM74,000 bagi 90 rumah di Pulau Pinang.

Katanya, sumbangan diberikan berjumlah antara RM1,000 sehingga RM10,000 bergantung kepada nilai kerosakan rumah.

"LKIM turut menyediakan rumah sementara kepada mangsa yang mengalami kerosakan rumah yang serius sementara menunggu kerja baik pulih siap.

"Di Tanjung Dawai, terdapat rumah yang rosak hampir keseluruhan, jadi kita bercadang memindah mangsa dan keluarganya ke kuarters LKIM sebelum kerja baik pulih dilakukan," katanya.



Jumlah bantuan membabitkan RM50,000 bagi membaik pulih 19 rumah di Perlis, RM87,000 bagi 79 rumah di Kedah dan RM74,000 bagi 90 rumah di Pulau Pinang.

**Muhammad Faiz Fadzil,
Pengerusi LKIM**

9/9/2019

UTUSAN
MALAYSIA

MEGA AGRO

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STRAWBERI atau nama saintifiknya dikenali sebagai *Fragaria ananassa* amat terkenal kerana keunikan rasa serta warna merah yang menarik. Buah strawberi adalah dikategorikan buah non-klimaterik yang tidak bermusim.

Strawberi dikenali dari keluarga Rosaceae yang mempunyai lebih 600 varieti. Ia boleh ditanam di negara empat musim atau beriklim tropika.

Ini akan mempengaruhi dan memberi kesan kepada kualiti dan rasa strawberi. Begitu juga dengan cara penanaman, penjagaan, genotip (baka) dan varieti akan mempengaruhi tumbesaran pokok dan hasil buah yang diperolehi.

Pada Jun lalu, penyidik dari Jabatan Kejuruteraan Proses dan Makanan, Fakulti Kejuruteraan Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) yang diketuai oleh Prof. Madya Dr. Rosnah Shamsudin mengadakan lawatan ke ladang strawberi di sekitar Nagano Prefecture, iaitu antara wilayah di Pulau Honshu, Jepun tidak jauh dari Tokyo.

Penyidik mendapat tajaan daripada Geran Fiskal Yayasan Sumitomo 2018 dari Jepun bagi menjalankan penyelidikan dalam penanaman dan pengeluaran produk strawberi.

Dr. Rosnah berkata, lawatan tersebut bertujuan menjalankan penyelidikan dalam penanaman dan pengeluaran produk strawberi yang diusahakan di negara itu.

"Keunikan sistem tanaman di Jepun adalah bagaimana negara empat musim itu berjaya menghasilkan buah berkenaan sepanjang tahun," ujarnya.

Lawatan tersebut turut disertai pnsyarah Fakulti Ekonomi dan Pengurusan UPM, Dr. Hanny Zurina Hamzah serta dua penyidik dari negara berkenaan iaitu Prof. Dr. Shuso Kawamura dari

Strawberi hibrid Jepun berbuah sepanjang tahun



Sekolah Lepas Siswazah Sains Pertanian, Universiti Hokkaido dan pnsyarah Universiti Tokyo, Prof. Madya Dr. Eriko Yasunaga.

Lawatan tersebut kata Dr Rosnah penting bagi mengetahui bagaimana penanam strawberi di Jepun dapat mengusahakan tanaman itu sepanjang tahun.

Berkongsi lebih lanjut beliau berkata, destinasi lawatan pertama ialah ladang penyelidikan dengan kerjasama Universiti Shinsu yang terletak di bandar Izuna dalam Nagano Prefecture.

Ladang tersebut baru dibuka tahun lalu dengan keluasan 1,200 meter persegi dibiayai oleh Kerajaan Jepun.

Menurut pemilik ladang, Toshimichi Hashizume, penyelidikan yang dijalankan adalah untuk menghasilkan strawberi hibrid iaitu cantuman lebih daripada dua varieti.

Ladang kedua dimiliki

oleh usahawan muda Naoki Yanagisawa, 37, mempunyai empat buah rumah hijau.

Rumah hijau yang terletak di bandar Komoro seluas 2,000 meter persegi dibina pada awal tahun ini dengan menggunakan teknik lebih moden.

Di samping menghasilkan buah segar, dia turut menghasilkan produk berasaskan strawberi seperti jus, jem, strawberi susu dan coklat.

Kesemua pengeluarannya adalah untuk pasaran dalam wilayah berkenaan sahaja.

Destinasi ketiga iaitu Ladang Strawberi Komoro Nunobiki yang dibuka sejak 1998 berkeluasan 9,000 meter persegi. Ia merupakan ladang komersial yang berjaya memasarkan buah segar bukan sahaja untuk dalaman bahkan luar Nagano Prefecture seperti Osaka dan Kyoto.



Malah, ia turut untuk pasaran luar seperti Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong dan Mongolia. Menurut Naib Presiden Kanannya, Hiroyuki Kuramoto, hasil pengeluaran tahunan syarikat adalah 90 tan dengan mempunyai 30 pekerja.

Sebahagian besar pengeluaran adalah buah segar dan selebihnya untuk produk jem dan daifuku (sejenis kuih daripada tepung pulut yang berinti kacang merah dan strawberi).

Destinasi keempat iaitu Ladang Taman Karuizawa yang terletak di bandar Karuizawa, berkeluasan 4,500 meter persegi dengan 10 pekerja.

Menurut Presidennya, Hidenori Yokochi, ladangnya dibuka sejak 2012 dengan hasil pengeluaran tahunan sebanyak 20 tan.

Di samping mengeluarkan buah segar, ladang berkenaan turut mengeluarkan produk seperti yogurt, susu strawberi, gula-gula, jeli, jus serta mentega dan krim, keju terutama untuk pasaran Prefecture Nagano dan pasaran luar negara seperti Thailand.



DR. ROSNAH SHAMSUDIN (tengah) bersama (dari kiri) Dr. Hiroshi Shimizu, Hiroyuki Kuramoto, Dr. Eriko Yasunaga dan Dr. Hanny Zurina di ladang strawberi yang dibawati.



BUAH strawberi yang dipetik disimpan dalam bakul lhas.



Manfaat teknologi rumah hijau

Di Jepun, ladang strawberi ditanam menggunakan struktur rumah hijau dengan suhu di antara 13 hingga 25 darjah Celsius iaitu suhu yang sesuai untuk tumbesaran strawberi.

Dinding rumah hijau menggunakan plastik lutsinar untuk memudahkan cahaya matahari menembusi rumah hijau untuk membantu tumbesaran pokok.

Plastik lutsinar mempunyai dua lapisan untuk digunakan semasa musim sejuk yang kadang-kadang suhu sehingga paras bawah titik beku.

Semasa musim panas, lapisan plastik lutsinar kedua akan digulung untuk mengelakkan kepanasan meningkat dalam rumah hijau yang boleh mengganggu tumbesaran pokok strawberi.

Selain itu, bagi menurunkan suhu dalam rumah hijau semasa musim panas, maka kipas angin dipasang pada aturan masa tertentu.

Air direnjis dengan menggunakan alat penyembur air (*sprinkler*) sebanyak tujuh atau lapan kali sehari iaitu bergantung kepada suhu dalam rumah hijau.

Ladang strawberi di Jepun menjalankan penanaman dalam takungan berbentuk beg plastik. Tanah bercampur sabut kelapa dan ada ladang yang mencampurkan dengan *rockwool* iaitu seperti batu kerikil berwarna putih yang bertujuan memegang air dan udara.

Setiap pokok dipasang dengan alat penyembur bagi memudahkan penyiraman air sebanyak dua atau tiga kali sehari. Penyembur air juga digunakan untuk menyalurkan baja pada setiap pokok.

Sukatan baja dibancuh dalam takungan dan akan dipam mengikut jadual.

Strawberi ditanam dalam dua tingkat iaitu tingkat bawah

setinggi satu meter dari tanah dan tingkat kedua kira-kira 1.7 meter dari tanah atau menyamai ketinggian seorang lelaki dewasa.

Tujuannya bagi memudahkan kanak-kanak dan orang kurang upaya berkerusi roda untuk memetik buah strawberi dan tingkat dua untuk orang dewasa.

Rumah hijau turut dilengkapi termometer bagi mengawal suhu supaya tidak terlalu panas atau sejuk. Ini kerana suhu dalam rumah hijau memainkan peranan penting dalam tumbesaran strawberi.

Jangka masa (*timer*) dipasang bagi mengawal kadar semburan air pada pokok dan persekitaran dalam rumah hijau. Jangka masa tersebut amat penting untuk memastikan pokok strawberi mendapat kadar air yang mencukupi mengikut sukatan ditetapkan selain mengurangkan tenaga kerja.

Selain itu, lampu diod pemancar cahaya (LED) juga dipasang setiap satu meter untuk membantu pencahayaan kepada pokok strawberi dalam rumah hijau. Sesetengah ladang di Jepun akan menyembur gas karbon dioksida untuk membantu pertumbuhan pokok. Tolok tekanan juga dipasang bagi memastikan kadar penyemburan gas tersebut mengikut sukatan.

Petik cara manual

KERJA-KERJA memetik buah strawberi yang mencapai tahap kematangan adalah secara manual. Buah yang dipetik terus dimasukkan dalam dulang pengumpulan atau kotak-kotak pembungkusan untuk tujuan pasaran tempatan.

Bagi warga tempatan yang ingin memetik sendiri buah strawberi, bayaran akan dikenakan mengikut timbangan berat buah yang dikumpul. Jika ingin memetik sambil makan buah strawberi, kadar bayaran berbeza dikenakan. Di Jepun amat popular dengan buah strawberi dicelup dengan susu pekat manis



DR. ROSNAH SHAMSUDDIN menunjukkan buah strawberi yang dihasilkan sepanjang tahun.

INFO

PENANAMAN STRAWBERI DI JEPUN

- Boleh hidup dalam musim panas.
- Buahnya tahan penyakit dan serangga perosak.
- Mempunyai rasa lebih manis dan bersaiz besar.
- Penanaman strawberi dijalankan menggunakan teknologi rumah hijau kerana iklim Jepun yang mempunyai empat musim berbeza.
- Kaedah penjagaan dan pengendalian projek penanaman strawberi adalah berbeza mengikut musim.

berbanding di Malaysia yang menggunakan coklat.

Dengan penanaman buah strawberi dalam rumah hijau, maka warga Jepun dapat menikmati buah strawberi segar sepanjang tahun.

Permintaan buah strawberi amat tinggi pada Disember hingga Mei setiap tahun sempena sambutan Hari Krismas dan tahun baharu. Hampir 80 peratus pengeluaran strawberi di Jepun adalah untuk dimakan segar di samping dikomersial kepada produk seperti hiasan kek, jem, coklat strawberi dan jus.

Dalam pada itu, Dr. Rosnah berharap dapat belajar sesuatu daripada lawatan tersebut terutama kaedah penyelidikan dan pembangunan (R&D) baka hibrid yang boleh mengeluarkan hasil sepanjang tahun.

Bellau kagum dengan

kesungguhan Jepun membangunkan industri tanaman bernilai tinggi yang berpotensi dikomersialkan.

"(Sepanjang lawatan) saya lihat penyelidik Jepun menggunakan konsep rumah hijau untuk mengawal suhu.

"Pokok strawberi boleh hidup pada suhu antara 13 gan 25 darjah Celsius.

"Meskipun mempunyai empat musim, apabila cuaca panas suhu dalam rumah hijau akan turun.

"Apabila musim sejuk adalah antara 13 hingga 25 darjah Celsius. Oleh itu, penanaman strawberi di pusat pelancongan tanah tinggi tersebut adalah sepanjang tahun.

Di Malaysia katanya, suhu di Cameron Highlands adalah antara 13 hingga 25 darjah Celsius. Oleh itu, penanaman strawberi di pusat pelancongan tanah tinggi tersebut adalah sepanjang tahun.



Pokok strawberi ditanam menggunakan sistem berteknologi tinggi.

By C.H. GOH
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ALMOST everyone would have grown up with some happy moments that involve chocolates. The sweet indulgence has long been known to bring cheer and comfort to people.

However, not as many are bothered with the origins of this sweet treat that most of us continue to enjoy today.

In recent years, artisanal chocolate brands have appeared in specialty boutiques, online stores and pop-up shops, each trying to tell a meaningful story of their source material and brand that would hopefully win them more customers.

This has led to a renewed interest in cacao and its many unique characteristics and applications that have yet to be fully explored.

Local chocolate maker Bennis Chocolate & Candy Manufacturer Sdn Bhd is riding on this wave, joining the troop of artisanal brands hoping to educate the market on a healthier and more sustainable option of chocolates.

Executive director Wilfred Ng says the company is moving beyond the conventional mass market for chocolates and candies to build a new high-end local chocolate brand.

The company, founded by Ng's father, has been around for a few decades.

But about two and a half years ago, Ng embarked on a new project to take Bennis to a new level with high-end cocoa products that aim to promote the unique taste of Asian cocoa.

The manufacturer positioned itself as a single origin bean-to-bar cacao product brand, ensuring that it controls the entire process of its chocolate products from sourcing

Sweet success

Chocolate maker aims for the higher-end market segment



In the spotlight: Ng says the popularity of bean-to-bar brands has also increased interest in chocolate-making.



Varied offering: Bennis produces a variety of products to meet the needs of different market segments.

of the beans right up to retail. Its branding strategy revolves around promoting the farms and farmers from whom they source their materials, as well as the history of the places where the estates are located. Bennis's model enables them to cut out the middleman by working directly with farmers who are often underpaid.

Its beans are sourced within Asia, particularly from cacao growing countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, India and Malaysia.

Bennis also produces cacao nibs and cacao teas. Ng explains that cacao tea, drunk since ancient Mayan times in South America, is said to be the purest form of cacao consumption and has the potential to be a unique product line for the company.

Cacao beans from Asia are largely underappreciated, says Ng. On the other hand, the high-end chocolate market is dominated by European and American brands.

A vast majority of cacao beans produced are currently sold to major manufacturers which produces commercial chocolates, leaving a large gap in the production of high-end chocolates from good quality Asian beans, he adds.

Bennis's products are currently retailed under the Bennis brand and stocked at upmarket retail and supermarkets in Malaysia and Singapore. They are also available at its online store.

With recognition for artisanal brands growing, Bennis is currently

constructing a new manufacturing facility next to its existing plant that will be dedicated to its Bennis range of products.

The current manufacturing plant produces around 100 tonnes of chocolate per month, including for third-party brands.

The new facility will have the capacity to produce up to 500kg of high quality chocolate per day, with areas designed to showcase to the public the entire history of chocolate production as well as the processes involved in making bean-to-bar chocolates.

Distinct tastes

Just like craft beer or speciality coffee, artisanal chocolates are crafted from unique tasting and high-quality cocoa beans from Latin American, Africa and Asia. The market for these products is growing in tandem with better standards of living and changing consumer trends, says Ng.

Consumers are increasingly developing an affinity for a more diverse taste in chocolate. As such, profiles such as bitterness, richness and complexity have become hall-mark characteristics for certain global chocolate brands.

On the other hand, brands that cater more to the Asian palate, including Japanese consumers, tend to gravitate towards chocolates that are milky, caramel-infused and soft-textured.

These, says Ng, are few and far

between, which gives Bennis room to grow in this segment.

Ng says Bennis is also making chocolate consumption less "sinful" by only producing dark chocolate.

"Everyone wants to eat chocolates, but many are reluctant to indulge in it because they think it is unhealthy and fattening," he says.

The company has three main product lines, comprising Alessio, which caters to the mass market, Gulliver, its mid-market range, and Bennis.

The Alessio range currently contributes more than 70% of the group's total revenue.

A chocolate hub

Cacao, which originates from South America, are raw seeds which can be cold pressed and eaten as a form of chocolate. However, most cacao seeds are roasted and ground to make cocoa powder, from which chocolate products are made.

Each cacao producing region has its own distinctive flavour profile.

For example, according to Bennis's website, most of its cacao sourced in South-East Asia have a fruity note.

Looking to increase the awareness and appreciation for cocoa from Asia, Ng says Bennis is looking at foreign strategic partnerships to bring its chocolates out.

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MALAYSIA once had a thriving cacao plantation sector. But over the years, other crops have taken over its place as a main source of agricultural products including rubber, oil palm and, now, durian.

There is a long history of cacao in Malaysia. The first cultivated cacao plant is said to be planted as early as in the 1770s, or about 250 years ago. The plantings propagated and contributed significantly to the country's economic growth.

At its peak in 1989, the cacao growing area had expanded to 415,000ha, placing Malaysia among the world's biggest cocoa producers. Industry practitioners even noted that Malaysia used to be the third largest cocoa exporter in the world.

However, cocoa production in Malaysia has since declined steadily. Cacao bean output in Malaysia has shrunk by half in the past decade as farmers, tired of battling crop diseases and aging trees, switch to more profitable crops.

According to the Malaysian Cocoa Board, the cacao growing area has shrunk to an estimated 15,000ha in 2018, producing only 800 tonnes of cocoa beans. In comparison, production of cocoa beans hovered around 250,000 tonnes in the early 1990s.

In the region, Indonesia is the largest cocoa bean producer. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, Indonesia grew 777,500 tonnes of cocoa beans in 2013, making it the world's third largest producer.

According to Benns Chocolate & Candy Manufacturer Sdn Bhd executive director Wilfred Ng, the

Can cocoa regain its shine?

Malaysia's exports of cocoa beans and products on growth path



Shrinking plantations: Cacao output in Malaysia has shrunk by half in the past decade as farmers turn to more lucrative crops. — Reuters

decline in Malaysia's cacao farming industry is a great loss as the country has some of the best soil for farming.

"One good example is the durian. While the fruit is native to South-East Asia, the best durian varieties

can only be produced here. Same with cacao, we can have some of the best cacao here to produce high quality products such as bean-to-bar chocolates," says Ng.

"The primary areas for cacao farming in Malaysia include Ranau

in Sabah, Kota Samarahan in Sarawak as well as Jerantut and Kuala Lipis in Pahang.

Ng believes that by promoting artisanal chocolate and expanding more into downstream segments with different usages for cocoa-

based products, local farmers and plantation owners will be able to fetch higher prices for good quality cacao beans. This could encourage farmers to give cacao crops another look.

The Board notes that cocoa prices have trended downwards in the last three months.

Given the revitalised popularity of specialty chocolates and shrinking cocoa production here, demand has naturally exceeded production of cocoa beans.

But while Malaysia lags in cocoa bean production, we are still a well-known manufacturing hub for chocolate products. Industry producers note that most chocolate products sold in the region by global brands are made in Malaysia.

Interestingly, although the production of cocoa beans has dropped significantly, Malaysia's export of cocoa beans and cocoa products have been growing steadily over the past 20 years.

The Malaysian Cocoa Board recorded exports for last year at RM5.5bil, with cocoa beans and cocoa butter making up the biggest portions of exported cocoa products. But note that the cocoa beans were mainly re-exported products.

This development could encourage more cacao plantations locally as manufacturers may opt to source for raw materials closer to their operations. There may be hope yet for this crop to regain some ground



Increasing output: Benns's new facility will have the capacity to produce up to 500 kg of high quality chocolate per day.



Sharing experiences: The company hopes to showcase more on its chocolate production processes to the public.



Underappreciated: Benns aims to promote more chocolate of Asian origin.

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"Because the technology of chocolate making is now more accessible, we are now able to make use of our own cacao beans to make our own chocolate brands," he adds.

The Asian market for chocolate confectionery has grown by a compounded annual rate of 5% in five years, as regional economies and populations expand, according to Euromonitor International.

Malaysia has more than 50 chocolate manufacturers and confectioneries and 194 local chocolate producers, with export value of about RM1.1bil last year from RM868mil in 2017, Ng says.

By 2020, Asia is expected to be the world's largest market for cocoa powder, used in products including cookies, chocolate drinks and ice cream, he adds.

Additionally, the popularity of bean-to-bar brands has also increased interest in chocolate-making.

It is no coincidence that leading global chocolate and cocoa product players such as Nestle, Barry Callebaut, Mondelez and

Promoting Asian cocoa

Hershey's have made Malaysia their hub for manufacturing operations.

One of the main differentiation factors that sets Benns apart in the market is its commitment to help improve the livelihoods of cocoa-growing communities by equipping them with the know-how of proper farming techniques so that they are better able to manage their farms and their livelihoods in a professional and sustainable manner.

"We pay high premiums of around US\$7 to US\$8 per kg to the farmers for their beans, much higher than the current market rate of around US\$3 per kg," shares Ng.

The quest by Benns to promote Asian origin chocolate has been in the making for almost 50 years, when senior Ng became one of the first few non-Europeans to start a chocolate confectionery business in 1973 in Singapore. He moved the operation to Malaysia in the early 1980s, leading to the

birth of Benns over the next decade.

Ng's father, who started the company in 1999, remains the controlling shareholder of the firm and still plays an advisory role at the age of 85.

Now the second-generation Ng is writing a new chapter that focuses on elevating the experience of chocolate-making in Benns' ongoing chocolate journey.

It aims to continue building its brand name besides capturing the new markets with the revival in demand from consumers, especially in Asia who are driving the growth in the chocolate industry. It is looking at mature markets to sell its high-end chocolates to including Japan, Europe and North America to promote Asian origin cacao-based products.

"The cocoa value chain can be significant in providing a clearer picture of the current operation of the cocoa industry in Malaysia and help identify the opportunity



Still a hub: Malaysia has been the choice location for chocolate producers to set up their manufacturing hub.

for upgrading as we become the major producer of chocolate products," he says.

Apart from its own chocolate products and contract manufacturing for other brands, Ng says Benns is also looking at expanding its cocoa-based products to

cover chocolate powders and cacao butter as the raw materials for soap and beauty products.

"Most high end cosmetics use cacao butter as one of the main ingredients, and this is one of the areas we are planning to explore," he says.

Headline	Sarawak govt spending RM8 million restoring durian tree		
MediaTitle	United Daily News (Kuching)		
Date	09 Sep 2019	Color	Full Color
Section	News	Circulation	39,116
Page No	8	Readership	117,348
Language	Chinese	ArticleSize	886 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 4,713
Frequency	Daily (EM)	PR Value	RM 14,140



本报美国 8 日讯 砂副首长兼第二财政部长拿督阿玛道格拉斯表示 今年砂拉越耗资 800 万令吉展开榴莲树复原计划 希望通过各项努力 能协助农民们提高他们的榴莲品质与产量

助農民搭上外銷國際列車

砂耗資 800 萬復原榴蓮樹

采访：刘丽美



砂副首长兼农业现代化、土著地及区域发展部长拿督阿玛道格拉斯为巴干奴的戈布罗农业研究站“榴莲节”活动主持开幕



巴干奴的戈布罗农业研究站“榴莲节”开幕

他说，目前全砂有40万棵榴莲树，不过绝大部分未获得良好照顾下，以至当我国榴莲成功进军国际市场，尤其在中国受到好价钱时，农民们都错失上榴莲高价列车的机会。

“砂政府目前正在通过突施计划鼓励农民们响应恢复榴莲树生产力。”

也是农业现代化、土著地及区域发展部长的道格拉斯指出，在2018年，砂拉越总共将10万公升的榴莲外销到国际市场，今年出口至国外的榴莲总价值将达20万公升。

他披露，政府在去年总共拨出250万令吉，展开榴莲树复原计划，在古晋、西贡、林梦、木中、美里扩大种植榴莲，今年此计划的拨款则增至800万令吉。

此外，政府也在策略性地点兴建榴莲收集、加工及包装中心，包括巴南内良芬拉得，协助农民将他们的榴莲运往收集中心，再加工与出口。

道格拉斯说，砂拉越还有

划定200万公顷土地做农业用途，但遗憾的是，大部分年轻人认为务农只要是辛苦和脏的工作，都不愿去从事，只是向往舒适、高薪的工作。

“砂拉越农产品出口逐年增长，在去年为砂拉越贡献了12.8%或1千520万令吉；在全砂130万个就业机会中也提供了30万个。显示农业领域在促进砂拉越经济增长扮演了重要角色。”

他称，为达到2030年成为农产品净出口的目标，砂政府也拨出2.869亿令吉通过多个项目提升农产品产量，以及改善农民的收入至4千令吉。

他指出，政府目前正通过致力协助转型，为达目标将委定具有经济价值的农作物，此外，农业部也正收集资料，以委定有经济价值的榴莲品种，以便未来推往市场。

道格拉斯是今早为巴干奴的戈布罗农业研究站的“榴莲节”活动主持开幕在彼词时，这么表示。

榴山王是最受欢迎的榴莲品种，他希望通过类似榴莲节活动，最少可以发掘1或2个可与榴山王齐名的本地榴莲品种，也可吁私人界积极研发榴莲加工产品，让人们全年都可享受到多种多样的榴莲产品。

出席者有砂交通部长拿督李耀胜、砂农业助理部长阿都拉曼伊萨、砂旅游、艺术及文化助理部长兼卑尔辖区州议员拿督依超摩律、德浪山区州议员丹尼斯拉、实兆的国会议员丹尼斯拉、巴干奴州议员丹尼斯拉、三卑尔州议员宜拉曼、莫林阿都阿拉及众社区领袖。



砂副首长拿督阿玛道格拉斯，左4，等人出席巴干奴的戈布罗农业研究站“榴莲节”开幕式合影，左2砂农业助理部长阿都拉曼伊萨，砂交通部长拿督李耀胜等人

'Government allocates RM20m to promote local products'

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It also serves as a tracking system on the whereabouts of imported items, such as which ports they are going to or had been in.

"If the items were imported but the final destination was not indicated or unclear, the ministry will seize the items.

"The condition imposed on AP holders is that the items should be sold only to industry players and factories, not retailers," he said, adding that two shipments were recently seized due to lack of disclosure on their final destinations.

The AP abuse was revealed by MyCC in the Market Review on Food Sector report published last month, which stated that the price of imported round cabbage had increased drastically.

However, Saifuddin said, the downside of the AP system was its inability to protect local chilli farmers.

"We import chillies because Cameron Highlands cannot meet the demand. Imported chillies are priced lower, and consumers are swayed by the price difference."

Saifuddin said, nevertheless, APs were important to maintain the demand of certain items, such as sugar.

Raw sugar AP is given to two main players — Central Sugars Refinery Sdn Bhd and MSM Malaysia Holdings Bhd.

"In this matter, we see how AP fits into the scenario since the two main players are able to produce refined sugar through their factories and meet demand.

"But in the event where de-

mand increases against the volume produced, or if there is a glitch at the factories, then there is a need to issue an AP on refined sugar.

"It is only for a short period of time, maybe five to eight months, and can only be used once as part of the monitoring mechanism."

'MADE IN MALAYSIA'

The government had allocated RM20 million to promote local brands, said Saifuddin, a huge rise from RM3 million last year.

To support local products and ensure that they are available across the country, the ministry has introduced a "30 per cent local product" policy on local and international hypermarkets.

"There has yet to be a hypermarket with 30 per cent local products due to their in-house

requirements, but these companies have been supportive of local products.

"This (policy) benefits the 174 small- and medium-sized enterprises, a majority of whom are Bumiputera Muslims. I know some local brands like Kopi Hang Tuah and Sos Mudim, and these brands have achieved big sales in international hypermarkets."

Saifuddin said local companies could be successful as long as they adhered to the requirements set by the authorities.

"I want to focus on local products. No matter who makes it, it should be made well, pass the Health Ministry requirements and are priced affordably. And, if necessary, obtain halal status."

He also touched on the possibility of price hikes following the boycott campaign started by

Muslim non-governmental organisations.

"First, they said boycott non-Muslim products. Then they changed their stand to 'buy Muslim products first.'"

On concerns by the Malaysian Employers Federation about the livelihood of employees working in non-Muslim companies, which could be affected by the boycott, Saifuddin said it was imperative that Malaysians focus on supporting local brands, instead of buying those produced by a certain race or religion.

"To say that prices of cooking oil, for instance, went down due to the boycott is inaccurate. This is because there are products that are sold cheaper prior to the campaign. At the end of the day, the choice is in the hands of consumers," he said.



The Malaysia Competition Commission has recently proposed a new wholesale market with e-commerce facilities to reduce dependency on middlemen and avoid extra cost in supplying food. FILE PIC

AFFORDABLE LIVING

CREATING MORE CONSUMER VALUE

KUALA LUMPUR

DOMESTIC Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail addresses bread-and-butter issues, such as the prices of essential goods and fuel, and shares the ministry's plans on elevating Malaysian products and e-commerce. **NURADZIMMAH DAIM and TEH ATHIRA YUSOF** report.

Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail believes the key to keeping tabs on the prices of items is by managing the supply chain.

The chain, he said, comprised a network of organisations, people, activities, data and resources involved in moving a product or offering a service to customers.

He cited the price of cabbage produced in Cameron Highlands, where there is a huge gap between the amount paid and what the farmers earn.

"When I was there for the by-election, I found that the vegetables were sold at RM5 per kg in Sungai Koyan (also in Pahang). Farmers in Cameron Highlands, however, complained that they sold the vegetable at only 50 sen per kg. What went wrong?"

"As it turned out, the supply has been sent on a 'detour' to the Selayang wholesale market before returning to Sungai Koyan (and its vicinity)."

He said the Malaysia Competition Commission (MyCC) had, in its report, recently proposed the establishment of a new wholesale market with e-commerce facilities to reduce dependency on middlemen and avoid extra cost in supplying food.

"In considering this recommendation, feedback from stakeholders, especially industry play-

ers, should be gathered and assessed as they are the ones who will be doing business there.

"MyCC also recommended the development of an inclusive e-commerce policy.

"Initiatives such as the adoption of e-commerce platforms, online auctions and the bidding system, which are nascent in Malaysia, should be encouraged among enterprises and consumers."

He said the government would consolidate e-commerce policies into a unified structure. He added that the recently launched Consumer Economic Shop Initiative (i-Keep) would also assist in selling essential items at a reasonable price.

FUEL SUBSIDY

The cost of living in urban areas was among the key considerations in implementing the new fuel subsidy scheme, said Saifuddin.

"We have to take into consideration the high cost of living in urban areas in implementing (the scheme). For instance, a couple with children living in the city, despite having a household income of RM5,000, may need this assistance.

"While we aim to help the B40 households (with a median monthly income of RM3,000), we should not disregard those in the M40 group (median monthly income of RM6,275), who are struggling with the high cost of living in the city," he said, adding that a database of recipients was being tabulated.

He said agencies like the Welfare Department were obtaining

details from the E-Kasih database, among others.

"Our database (on the fuel subsidy scheme) should have an 'opt-in' and 'opt-out' feature, meaning, while a list of eligible recipients would be made ready, new ones could be added accordingly.

"The same goes for people who are no longer deemed eligible. They should be removed to ensure fairness. We will gather input from other ministries when presenting the cabinet paper before the proposal is finalised and implemented."

He said meetings and dialogues had been held with fuel companies, petrol station operators and consumer groups.

"We obtained feedback from 3,500 petrol station operators nationwide before coming up with the proposal.

"While they were supportive of the idea, it should not incur further cost as it could affect their profit margin," he said, adding that the implementation of the scheme would see the fuel price caps removed. He hoped the new fuel subsidy scheme could be implemented before the year end.

KEEPING PERMITS IN CHECK

The ministry is keeping a close watch on possible abuse of approved permits (APs) on sugar, flour and beef through its online system.

Saifuddin said the online system would require AP holders to key in data of the imported produce, which serves as a monitoring system for the ministry.

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Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail