



LAPORAN LIPUTAN MEDIA HARIAN  
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UKK KPKM

UNIT KOMUNIKASI KORPORAT  
KEMENTERIAN PERTANIAN DAN KETERJAMINAN MAKANAN  
(UNTUK EDARAN DALAMAN KPKM, JABATAN DAN AGENSI SAHAJA)

TARIKH	MEDIA	RUANGAN	MUKA SURAT
24/6/2025	UTUSAN MALAYSIA	DALAM NEGERI	11

# Cubaan seludup pokok ceri gagal

**RANTAU PANJANG:** Batalion 9 Pasukan Gerakan Am (PGA) PGA menggagalkan cubaan menyeludup 10,000 anak pokok ceri Barbados dan bunga cengkih selepas menahan sebuah lori di sini semalam.

Menerusi Op Taring Wawasan Kelantan pada pukul 11 pagi itu, PGA turut menahan pemandu lori berusia 34 tahun untuk membantu siasatan berkaitan rampasan barangan yang dipercayai diseludup dari Thailand.

Komander Briged Tenggara, Datuk Nik Ros Azhan Nik Ab. Hamid berkata, hasil pemerik-

saan ke atas lori itu menjumpai 5,000 anak pokok ceri Barbados.

Menurutnya, turut ditemui 5,000 anak pokok bunga cengkih dan kedua-dua jenis anak pokok yang disyaki mempunyai serangga perosak dan penyakit.

“Anggaran rampasan termasuk lori dianggarkan berjumlah RM400,000 dan kesemua rampasan diserahkan kepada Jabatan Pertanian Kelantan.

“Semua anak-anak pokok itu dipercayai dihantar ke sebuah nurseri untuk pasaran tempatan,” katanya ketika dihubungi pemberita semalam.



**SEBAHAGIAN** anak pokok yang diseludup dari Thailand berjaya dirampas selepas Pasukan Gerakan Am (PGA) menahan sebuah lori di Rantau Panjang, Kelantan semalam. - IHSAN PGA

TARIKH	MEDIA	RUANGAN	MUKA SURAT
24/6/2025	HARIAN METRO	LOKAL	7

**Rantau Panjang:** Pasukan Gerakan Am (PGA) merampas 10,000 pokok bunga cengkih dan cherry barbados membabitkan nilai keseluruhan RM400,000 di hadapan sebuah klinik kesihatan awam di sini, kelmarin.

Rampasan jam 11 pagi itu dibuat selepas anggota PGA menahan sebuah lori dalam keadaan mencurigakan.

## 10,000 pokok bunga cengkih, cherry barbados dirampas

Komander Briged Tenggara Datuk Nik Ros Azhan Nik Ab Hamid berkata, hasil pemeriksaan mendapati 5,000 anak pokok Cherry Barbados dan 5,000 anak pokok bunga cengkih ditemui di dalam lori itu disyaki diserang serangga

perosak dan penyakit.

Katanya, pemandu lori berusia 34 tahun yang dipercayai mahu menghantar tanaman berkenaan ke sebuah nurseri ditahan untuk siasatan lanjut.

"Anggaran nilai rampasan bernilai RM400,000

termasuk lori dan barang kes diserahkan kepada Jabatan Pertanian Kelantan untuk tindakan selanjutnya," katanya.

Menurutnya, kes disiasat mengikut Seksyen 6 Akta Kuarantin Tumbuhan 1976 (Akta167).



PGA merampas 10,000 pokok bunga cengkih, cherry barbados membabitkan nilai keseluruhan RM400,000 di hadapan Klinik Kesihatan Gual Tinggi, Rantau Panjang.

# 'Malaysia grapples with serious shortage of veterinarians'

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH  
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**PUTRAJAYA:** Malaysia is grappling with a serious shortage of veterinarians, with only 2,553 registered practitioners nationwide, far short of what is needed to support the country's expanding veterinary, livestock and pet care sectors.

Veterinary Services Department (DVS) director-general Dr Akma Ngah Hamid said the latest figures from the Malaysian Veterinary Council (MVC) show that 2,455 veterinarians are registered under Part 1, while just 98 fall under Part 2 of the registry.

Under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1974, the MVC classifies veterinarians into two categories. Part 1 comprises fully qualified practitioners whose degrees are recognised by the council, while Part 2 includes individuals who have yet to qualify for full registration – typically foreign graduates whose credentials are not recognised in Malaysia or those still undergoing assessment.

"This number is simply not enough to meet the increasing demand," she said.

"The rapid growth of the livestock industry, the surge in pet clinics, the rise in veterinary research and the expansion of veterinary academic programmes clearly show the urgent need for more qualified professionals in the field," she said during the World Veterinary Day 2025 celebration at the Multipurpose Hall, Wisma Tani, Putrajaya.

The event, officiated by Agriculture and Food Security Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Isham Ishak, not only honoured the contributions of veterinarians but also underscored the pressing challenges facing the profession.

"Veterinarians are more than just animal doctors – they are guardians of public health and food security," Isham said.

"From farm to table, they ensure our food is safe, clean and of high quality."

He emphasised the need to strengthen Malaysia's veterinary and agro-food systems to

enhance national food self-sufficiency.

"However, the limited supply of new veterinary professionals remains a significant bottleneck.

"Only two public universities – Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan – offer veterinary programmes. Combined, they produce 200 to 300 graduates each year," Isham added.

When asked why only two universities offer veterinary programmes, Isham said the field demands significant investment in specialised infrastructure, including veterinary hospitals, and must meet rigorous professional standards, making it both costly and resource-heavy.

This limited training pipeline has led to a brain drain, with many graduates opting for higher-paying jobs in the private sector instead of joining government service.

As a result, the public sector continues to face a shortage of veterinarians, affecting the nation's ability to manage disease control, food safety and animal welfare effectively.

"To solve food security challenges, we must embrace technology and innovation," Isham said.

"We need young talents from universities, not just to become farmers, but to work as service providers, researchers and innovators who can bring value-added solutions to our communities."

He also stressed the importance of research and development, urging greater investment in veterinary science to enhance livestock production and improve disease diagnostics.

"Malaysia must ensure our veterinary research is on par with international standards."

Meanwhile, Malaysia's pet care industry continues to flourish and plays a growing role in the national economy.

Isham added that the sector has become a key economic driver, generating jobs and business opportunities through veterinary clinics and related services.

"In some households, pet medical bills are now higher than those for humans," he said.

# Vet gap strains food safety

## Day for heroes:

(From left) DVS senior director Dr Aida Muhid, Badrul Hisham and Akma launching World Veterinary Day celebration at Wisma Tani in Putrajaya. —AZHAR MAHFOF/ The Star



## At least 4,000 more needed, says expert

By FAZLEENA AZIZ  
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**PUTRAJAYA:** Malaysia requires at least 6,000 veterinarians to meet demand, says Prof Emeritus Datin Paduka Setia Datuk Dr Aini Ideris.

The Pro-Chancellor of IMU University said there is a need for more universities, including private institutions, to offer veterinary medicine courses.

"There are thousands of students who are interested, but there are insufficient placements available for them to study in the country.

"The gap between the current number of vets and the required ones is about 4,000.

"For example, Malaysia can produce an average of about 200 vets in a year from Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan.

"Imagine how long it will take to fill the gap.

"It is also an expensive course because you need a hospital and state-of-the-art equipment. This is why public universities cannot expand more than their capacity," she said when met here yesterday.

She added there was no shortage of potential veterinary medicine students as thousands apply for such programmes every year. But only a handful make the cut.

Dr Aini was speaking to reporters after receiving the Excellent Veterinary Award for Veterinary Education in conjunction

with the World Veterinary Day celebration organised by the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS).

In her opening remarks, DVS director-general Dr Akma Ngah Hamid said based on Veterinary Council of Malaysia data, there are 2,553 active veterinary practitioners in the country.

"The number of veterinarians is insufficient to cope with the demand for the various services related to this field.

"The rapid development in the livestock industry, the increase of veterinary clinics for pets and research, and the growing number of higher education institutions in the veterinary field have caused the demand for these services to surge.

"As such, the country still needs more experts in the veterinary field," she said.

In his speech, Agriculture and Food Security Ministry deputy secretary-general (Development) Datuk Badrul Hisham Mohd said many people are unaware that the role of veterinarians goes beyond just caring for sick animals.

They also have a big responsibility to ensure food supplies are sufficient, clean, of good quality and safe for human consumption, he added.

"In the food supply chain, the veterinarians are the frontliners in ensuring food from farm to table is constantly monitored.

"At the DVS level, the team not only implements disease control, but they also carry out research and development and improve the livestock industry," he said.

# Usahawan ternakan lembu buktikan mampu raih pendapatan tinggi

**Manjung:** Meninggalkan hasrat memasuki pekerjaan sektor awam seperti semua abang dan kakaknya kira-kira 18 tahun lalu, tidak dikesali Mohd Farish Ahmad, 39, yang kini bergelar usahawan ternak lembu fidlot berjaya.

Lebih membanggakan, menerusi syarikat Myafarish Agrofarm yang dibangunkan, perolehan tahunan Mohd Farish boleh mencecah tujuh angka. Selain mengusahakan ternakan lembu fidlot di Kampung Sungai Tuntong, Pengkalan Bharu, Pantai Remis, lepasan Diploma Perakuanan Politetnik Sultan Azlan Shah (PSAS) Behrang itu turut mengusahakan beberapa perniagaan lain. Antaranya pasar mini, khidmat katering, sewaan kanopi, dan jualan makanan ternakan. Mohd Farish yang juga anak bongsu daripada lapan beradik berkata, dia mula menceburi bidang ternakan sejak tamat pengajian di PSAS pada 2007. Ibu dan bapanya yang banyak mendorong dia mengusahakan tanah terbiar peninggalan datuknya, berbanding kerja makan gaji.

## 2030 PERAK SEJAHTERA

"Mulanya saya menginginkan kerja kerajaan memandangkan semua abang dan kakak saya berkhidmat sebagai kakitangan awam. Sebaliknya, emak menggalakkan saya mengusahakan kebun di kampung yang sebelum ini diusahakan arwah datuk.

"Namun, apabila datuk meninggal dunia, kebun itu terbiar. Saya turut nasihat emak dan mulakan dengan menternak lima ekor lembu secara lepas bebas pada 2008.

"Selepas itu agensi kerajaan terutamanya Jabatan Perkhidmatan Veterinar (JPV) banyak menyalurkan bantuan. Pembabitannya bersama Pertubuhan Peladang Kawasan (PPK) juga sangat membantu hingga saya mencapai tahap sekarang," katanya kepada BH.

Lembu yang diternak Mohd Farish di kawasan seluas satu hektar



Mohd Farish menerima anugerah Usahawan Peladang Terbaik MAHA 2024.

suatu ketika dulu pernah mencecah sehingga lebih 200 ekor apabila ditermak secara lepas bebas di kawasan kebun kelapa sawit.

Bagaimanapun, jumlah itu kini berkurangan apabila mod ternakan ditukar kepada fidlot berikutan, beberapa kekangan jika ditermak secara lepas bebas terutamanya masalah lembu hilang.

### Bantuan lembu, geran

Menurutnya, selain bantuan berupa pinjaman dalam bentuk pemberian lima lembu betina untuk dijadikan induk pembiak baka dia turut menerima bantuan geran bernilai RM111,000 daripada JPV.

Katanya, pembabitannya bersama PPK juga sangat membantu terutama dalam menukar mod ternakan, daripada lepas bebas

kepada penternakan fidlot. "Cara ini dapat mengurangkan keberuntungan kepada orang tengah dalam pemasaran lembu dan memaksimumkan pulangan.

"Daripada lima induk lembu terawal yang saya ternak, ternakan itu menjadi kira-kira 30 ekor. Namun, apabila lembu sudah banyak, jualan pula bermasalah memandangkan perlu melalui orang tengah.

"Bagaimanapun, dengan tunjukkan pelbagai kursus, saya semakin berdaya," katanya.

Mohd Farish berkata sebab-besarnya besar daripada pulangan dipenternakan lembu manakala perniagaan pasar mini yang menjual sebahagian hasil penternakan diusahakannya dan dikendalikan sepenuhnya oleh isterinya, Mahirah Supri, 38.

"Terkini, saya juga ada buat usaha sama dengan Perbadanan Pembangunan Pertanian Negeri Perak (Perak SADC) bagi jualan makanan ternakan dan turut membekalkan makanan lembu," katanya.

Pencapaian Mohd Farish sebagai usahawan ternak melayakkan beliau menerima beberapa anugerah antaranya Anugerah Usahawan Peladang Terbaik MAHA 2024 dan Anugerah Peladang Muda Pintar Kebangsaan 2024 Lembaga Pertubuhan Peladang (LPP).

JPV serta Perak SADC diletakkan sebagai antara agensi peneraju dalam andalan atau *flagship* Lembah Bakul Makanan Malaysia (sekuriti makanan) menerusi pelan pembangunan negeri, Pelan Perak Sejahtera 2030 cetusan Menteri Besar Perak, Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad.

## Harga makanan import dijangka melonjak jika perang terus merebak

FOTO: AFP



Anggota pasukan penyelamat Iran membersihkan runtuhan di sebuah bangunan yang musnah akibat serangan Israel di Teheran.

**SHAH ALAM** - Kenaikan mendadak harga makanan import antara kesan langsung paling besar diterima Malaysia sekiranya perang skala besar berlaku susulan penglibatan Amerika Syarikat dalam konflik Iran-Israel.

Pakar Ekonomi dari Universiti Sains dan Teknologi Malaysia (MUST), Profesor Emeritus Dr Barjoi Bardai berkata, konflik yang memasuki fasa baharu itu berkemungkinan akan menyebabkan penutupan Selat Hormuz yang menjadi laluan perdagangan penting kepada negara.

Menurutnya, makanan import seperti buah-buahan dan sayur-sayuran merupakan barangan yang dijangka berdepan kenaikan harga ketara sekiranya situasi di rantau itu makin meruncing.

"Malaysia sebagai sebuah negara terbuka yang mengimport lebih RM90 bilion makanan pasti akan terjejas akibat konflik ini. Apa yang boleh kita katakan sektor makanan antara yang paling ter-kesan. Kebetulan pula mulai 1 Julai ini akan dilaksanakan peluasan SST yang turut melibatkan buah-buahan serta sayur-sayuran import.

"Jadi, kesan yang akan diterima juga menjadi lebih besar. Harga barang yang diimport meningkat, kemudian cukai di Malaysia juga akan dinaikkan dan semestinya kesan situasi ini besar ke atas barang makanan.



BARJOYAI

"Berdasarkan perkembangan yang kian meruncing, kita boleh jangkakan barang import berasaskan makanan seperti sayur-sayuran dan buah-buahan akan meningkat.

"Selain itu, kita juga jangkakan kesan seterusnya terhadap makanan yang telah dimasak dan harga makanan di restoran juga akan mengalami ke-

naikan," katanya kepada *Sinar Harian*. Beliau berkata, semua pihak juga perlu bersedia berdepan dengan kesan merata susulan konflik itu kerana ia bukan sahaja melibatkan barangan import tetapi juga produk yang dikeluarkan di Malaysia.

Pesawah rai Aidiladha dengan rasa syukur, hasil tuai produktif

## Korban Masa, Tenaga Demi Negara

**KUALA SELANGOR** – "Bila saya lihat orang makan nasi, saya rasa bangga. Usaha saya sampai ke pinggan mereka."

Itu luahan pesawah muda, Mohd. Izuan Zainal Abidin, 38, dari Tanjung Karang yang tidak pernah jemu berbakti kepada tanah sejak lebih sedekad lalu demi kelangsungan keterjaminan makanan negara.

Mengusahakan tujuh hektar sawah di Blok Q, Sawah Sempadan, Izuan berkata, Aidiladha baru-baru ini lebih bermakna apabila dapat menyambutnya dengan tenang bersama keluarga selepas menamatkan musim menuai yang mencatat hasil memberangsangkan.

"Alhamdulillah, saya sempat ziarah keluarga dan serta ibadiah korban di kampung. Musim tuai kali ini lebih baik, hasil juga meningkat. Syukur atas rezeki yang Allah beri, dan berkat bantuan daripada kerajaan serta BERNAS yang sentiasa membantu kami pesawah," katanya.

Bapa kepada tiga anak itu mula meraih pengalaman dalam sektor makanan rui utama tersebut selepas mengikuti dan membantu arwah bapanya melakukan kerja-kerja penanaman padi sejak di alam sekolah menengah.

Anak sulung lima beradik itu merupakan antara peserta Projek SMART Sawah Berskala Besar (SMART SBB) IADA Barat Laut Selangor di bawah seliaan Padiberas Nasional Berhad (BERNAS), yang jelas memberi impak positif terhadap produktiviti sawahnya, dengan keuntungan bersih lebih 60 peratus berbanding penanaman padi biasa meskipun cara penanaman dan penjagaannya hampir sama.



**MOHD. IZUAN** mula berjinak-jinak terlibat dengan penanaman padi sejak di bangku sekolah iaitu ketika membantu arwah bapanya yang juga seorang pesawah. – IQBAL ROSLI

"Daripada sebidang tanah, kini saya mengusahakan tujuh bidang tapak sawah yang berkeluasan lebih tujuh hektar," ujarnya.

Jelas Mohd. Izuan, beliau perlu bekerja keras untuk memastikan hasil tuai sawahnya mampu mencapai antara enam atau tujuh tan bagi setiap tapak untuk beroleh keuntungan.

### Hasil Lebih Baik, Untung Berganda

Mohd. Izuan mengakui sokongan teknikal, penyediaan benih berkualiti, bantuan subsidi serta penggunaan mesin dan teknologi dron melalui inisiatif BERNAS membantunya

meningkatkan hasil sawah, meskipun berdepan cabaran cuaca tidak menentu dan ancaman perosak.

"Dulu untung saya sekitar RM3,000 sahaja. Sekarang hasil boleh capai sehingga RM5,000.

Pendapatan ini bantu sara keluarga dan simpan untuk musim depan. Saya amat berterima kasih kepada BERNAS yang banyak beri tunjuk ajar dan sokongan," jelasnya.

Awal tahun ini, Perdana Menteri Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim mengumumkan bantuan khas tambahan BERNAS yang keseluruhannya berjumlah RM90 juta untuk pesawah seluruh negara. Ia satu langkah yang disambut baik oleh golongan petani kecil

seperti Izuan. Izuan juga menerima sokongan dalam bentuk peralatan, racun dan teknologi.

Lebih membanggakan, Mohd. Izuan juga aktif menyertai bengkel pembangunan varieti padi tahan cuaca ekstrem bersama MARDI dan menjadikan penglibatan tersebut sebagai sumbangan kecilnya demi masa depan keterjaminan makanan negara.

"Kerja pesawah ini bukan glamor. Tapi bila nasi sampai ke meja rakyat Malaysia, itulah kepuasan kami. Saya harap lebih ramai anak muda berani turun ke sawah sebab ini soal bekalan makanan negara," katanya.



**MOHD. IZUAN**

### BERNAS: Rakan Strategik Pesawah

Sejak sekian lama, BERNAS berperanan penting sebagai pemegang amanah kerajaan dalam memastikan ekosistem industri padi negara kekal stabil – daripada input pertanian, logistik, pemasaran hinggalah sokongan harga minimum belian padi.

Kisah Mohd. Izuan membuktikan peranan BERNAS bukan sekadar pemai industri, tetapi rakan strategik yang bersama pesawah di lapangan, termasuk ketika musim sukar.

"Seperti petani kecil lain, margin keuntungan sangat tipis. Walaupun guna dron dan pekerja upahan, pendapatan tetap bergantung kepada kualiti hasil," kata Mohd. Izuan. Matlamat jangka panjangnya adalah menambah keluasan tanah serta memiliki jentera sendiri yang dapat menjimatkan kos.

"Bagi musim tanaman baharu bermula Julai ini, saya akan menggunakan benih padi wangi yang dibekalkan BERNAS di semua tapak tanaman dan Insya-Allah, hasilnya nanti lebih baik," katanya.

**MOHD. IZUAN** menyembur racun selepas musim menuai di petak sawah yang disewanya di Tanjung Karang baru-baru ini.



STARMETRO, TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2025

Zamri (left) and wife showing farm visitor Ramizah Mohd Yadi (right) how to pluck birds' eye chillis.



## Turning Selangor farms into tourist attractions

Story and photos by GRACE CHEN  
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BANANAS are such a common fruit that it's hard to imagine anyone would be thrilled to see a bunch on the plant before they are harvested.

Yet, when a group of visitors at Selangor Fruit Valley in Bestari Jaya, Kuala Selangor passed by a row of pseudostems with clusters of fruit, the children pointed excitedly at the plants and shouted, "Look! Bananas! Bananas!"

Among those visiting the popular agrotourism destination was Rasimah Sukor from Rawang, with her grandchildren in tow. "You can take a boat ride, pet animals and look at an actual fruit tree."

"It's the children who stand to benefit the most, especially where educational value is concerned," she said.

Children raised in the city, Rasimah said, might think that food comes from a supermarket.

"By realising that it takes time and effort to grow something, they will learn not to waste food," she said.

Hairul Reazuan Asmayadi,

Fresh produce, scenic surroundings make agrotourism a top draw in several districts

general manager of a tour company that specialises in trips to farms in Sabak Bernam, has noted visitors being fascinated by fruits and vegetables being grown.

Hairul and his three partners decided to tap into the potential of local farm products in the area, given the significant flow of weekend traffic from the Klang Valley to northern Selangor.

The draw is the rustic setting amid lush padi fields where visitors are able to directly engage with local farmers and cottage industry owners.

The tour company's target market is senior citizens.

Hairul observed that this market segment was also more willing to spend.

Another target market is families with young children.

"In the past three years, results have been encouraging."

"There are no fewer than three busloads of tourists to this destination on a weekly basis."

"This does not include inde-

pendent travellers who flock to the area on weekends.

"As we see it, potential for agrotourism development in Sungai Panjang is high, especially with Sabak Bernam being included in the route map of West Coast Expressway (WCE)."

Hasni said in addition to the farms, the vast, green rice fields of Sungai Panjang were part of the agrotourism experience.

He also includes stops at cottage industries such as the coconut biscuit workshop run by Norleha Sadari at Jalan Parit 3 Timur.

Set among padi fields, visitors are able to try samples while they take wiefies.

Unfortunately, one of the biggest dilemmas of agro-based tours is the mismatch of supply and demand, says one tour coordinator.

"We may have visitors, but farms might have nothing to show at the time," says Hasni Kassim, a mother of seven who plays a key role in selecting suitable farms for tour packages.

"However, when farms are bursting with produce, the holiday season may have come to an end," said Hasni, who is also a micropreneur selling crisps made out of cassava.

### Taste of farm life

While produce may be the highlight of tours, visitors are also intrigued by the farmers' stories.

At Kampung Rancangan Tanah Belia (RTB) 2 in Banting, Kuala Langat district, for example, the tale of how birds' eye chilli grower Zamri Hassan salvaged his plot after the 2021 floods washed his plants away, is an inspiring one.

Water which had risen to waist level washed all 1,500 of his poly bags away.

Determined to persevere, he and his wife reset the fertigation system for some 3,000 chilli plants by hand.

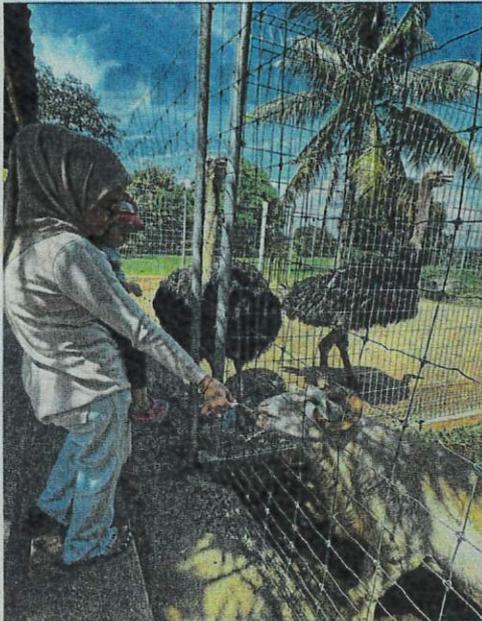
Even the owner of the Thai restaurant where visitors usually end their Sabak Bernam tour



Lim (right) entertaining visitors at the Paddy Gallery in Sekinchan.



Mohd Noorhardy: Allowing visitors creates additional source of revenue.



(Above) Visitors taking advantage of scenic surroundings at a pineapple farm in Sungai Merab to take photos.

(Left) Some agrotourism spots such as Selangor Fruit Valley allow people to engage with and feed animals.

with a spicy helping of *kam heong* crabs, has an interesting story on how he changed fields. It turns out that Mohd Syukri Daud, who operates in Bagan Sungai Besar, was formerly a padi planter from Teluk Intan, Perak.

He switched to the food business about a year ago after suffering losses amounting to RM10,000 when his rice fields were destroyed by floodwaters. The move has proved lucrative to the former farmer, with the eatery bringing in a more reliable income.

#### Agrotourism rewards

Sekinchan in Sabak Bernam, also has its fair share of outdoor attractions, such as the Wishing Tree at Pantai Redang with its ribbon-festooned branches.

Another is the Paddy Gallery surrounded by lush, green rice fields.

Allen Lim, managing director of PLS Marketing, a padi processing company that owns the gallery, recalls its humble beginnings.

"In 2006 I outfitted a 12m container with a small mill to show people how rice is processed. "We also included information on how diseases like leaf cancer can affect yields," said the father of four.

The sixth of 10 siblings, Lim came from a family of padi farmers.

He had grown up watching his mother, Pua Choon, sow seedlings by hand on their 4.85ha plot before the advent of machinery in the 1970s.

Lim said the idea of starting a visitor centre came about when the company was about to start its new rice mill.

"At first, not many people agreed with me. They would ask, 'What's nice to see in a factory?'"

"But I wanted people to see how we processed our rice. "Not only would this be educational, it would give them confidence in the quality of our



Hairul says people who visit farms are fascinated by the sight of fruits and vegetables growing. — Courtesy pic

products," he said.

As part of his research, Lim travelled to Taiwan where rice fields are among the country's tourist attractions.

By 2016, the container had grown into an air-conditioned gallery. Visitors could also, for a small fee and from behind a large glass windows, safely observe how rice is processed.

"Since its opening until now, the gallery has gone through two upgrades.

"In all, we have spent close to RM2mil on the development of this facility," said Lim.

There is also a padi garden next door made up of 16 plots where visitors can experience the rice planting process.

Nineteen years on, Lim said he was glad to have incorporated the agrotourism aspect into his business activities.

"There were many times I could rely on the revenue from this sector for additional income," he said.

The same is observed by pineapple grower Mohd Noorhardy

Mohd Noorzain from Sungai Merab, Kajang in Hulu Langat district.

Mohd Noorhardy observed that when a farmer made allowances for visitor arrivals, he was also creating an additional source of revenue.

Having started a cafe on his farm in 2019, the father of seven said agrotourism activities now contributed up to 70% of his business revenue.

However, he strongly advises those planning to venture into agrotourism to do their research.

Before opening his cafe, Mohd Noorhardy visited a tea plantation in Cameron Highlands, Pahang, a dairy farm in Kundasang, Sabah, and a durian orchard in Penang.

It was important, he said, that farmers identify their farm's strengths.

"One of them could be the surrounding scenery. "Creating Instagrammable spots where visitors can take selfies would help promote the place.

"The surrounding infrastructure, such as ample parking and proper access roads, must also be considered," he added.

Another important point to consider is potential damage to the farm from the increase in foot traffic.

"People, especially young visitors who have never seen fruits growing in nature, may inadvertently lop a fruit off a plant.

"It is advisable to set aside 20% of the farm's expenditure for damage.

"Signage to advise visitors to exercise caution are a way to raise awareness," Mohd Noorhardy said.

#### Grants available

According to the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry portal, agrotourism grants to a maximum of RM200,000 are available to small and micro-enterprises with yearly sales revenues of not more than RM3mil.

Applicants will need to finance

any balance that exceeds the government's contribution.

The grants are extended to Malaysian citizens who cultivate crops and livestock, or run fishery and agricultural-based industries.

Applications can be made through the relevant agencies such as Fisheries Development Authority, Veterinary Services Department, Malaysian Pineapple Board and Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute.

The scope of aid for these grants are for the building of infrastructure and repair of entrance roads.

They also apply to sales galleries, toilets and visitor information centres as well as upgrades and building of drainage, piping systems and signage.

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