

## Research to Make Malaysia Top Durian Destination

CLOSE cooperation between departments, institutions of higher learning and the private sector can drive the development of a sustainable agricultural ecosystem which can maximise the economic sustainability value of the country's agro-food sector.

Agricultural Department director-general Datuk Zahimi Hassan said this when officiating the launch of LKE Group Sdn Bhd's first shariah-compliant durian partnership legacy programme on May 14. As part of the programme, LKE has partnered with Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC) to conduct research on the most effective science-based methods to grow and care for durian plants in the long-term, in an effort to uplift the industry and make Malaysia the ideal destination for durian exports globally. Zahimi, who also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MoA) between LKE and TAR UC, said the rising popularity of the "king of fruits" is a new source of wealth for the nation. "Malaysia produced 390,635 metric tonnes of durian in 2020. Of the 76,895ha of land planted with durian trees, some 40% were of the Musang King variety. "The country's durian production is expected to grow to 493,397 metric tonnes by 2025," he said, adding that global demand for durian is anticipated to hit USD30bil (RM132bil) by then.

Malaysia, he said, has penetrated markets like China, Taiwan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Singapore, Vietnam and Japan, with great potential for the sale and development of more durian products.

"Many durian orchards are adopting smart agricultural technology such as the Internet of Things (IoT) in the irrigation and fertilisation systems, and the use of sensors to monitor the fruit collection and QR codes for traceability.

“I am confident that the adaptation of modern agricultural technology along this value chain can increase the productivity and quality of local durian fruit production for the global market,” Zahimi said in a press release.

LKE co-founder and managing director Jeremy Chin said the MoA with TAR UC will see both parties conducting a research programme using soil samples to study the effects of variables on the growth and health of durian trees. “We hope to make groundbreaking discoveries that will be beneficial for the entire industry as a whole, potentially boosting the national economy through trade and export as the demand for durians abroad is on a constant rise,” he said



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