

05/09/2002

Greater access to Mardi technology for private sector

SERDANG, Wed. - To promote agriculture as the third engine of growth after manufacturing and tourism, the Malaysian Agriculture Research and Development Institute (Mardi) will give the private sector greater access to its technology.

Under an amendment to the Mardi Act 1969, Mardi would be allowed to commercialise its technology.

Mardi director-general Datuk Dr Saharan Anang said the amendment would allow the transfer of Mardi's technology via joint ventures, licensing and consultation with private companies.

"Co-ordination of this transfer will be handled by the Centre for Promotion and Commercialisation of Technology, Marditech and our business development unit," he said.

The amendment would only come into effect after being gazetted in October.

Saharan said this move would boost the institute's role as "a contributor towards economic growth", by providing the necessary technology for sustainable development and wealth creation in food production, processing as well as mechanisation.

Citing the MR219 padi variety developed at Mardi as a successful example of the technological transfer to the private sector, he said it had doubled rice yields to 10 tonnes per hectare per season.

"Most areas planted with the variety had exceeded the 10-tonne yield per hectare," he said.

He added that Malaysia would be self-sufficient in rice production if the MR219 variety were planted across half the 900,000 hectares of rice fields in the country.

On the Malaysian Science and Technology Convention 2002 themed "Sustainable Agriculture Development and Wealth Creation", Saharan, who is the convention's technical chairman, said: "The convention aims to increase the awareness of applying biotechnology to utilise the country's rich biodiversity but within sustainable means."

He said use of technology in agriculture was still low except for oil palm and rubber, even though the technology was available and the Government had been providing incentives to attract investment.

Organised by the Academy of Sciences Malaysia, with the support of the Agriculture Ministry and the Science, Technology and Environment Ministry, the convention will discuss the application of science and technology in agriculture.

The convention will be held on Sept 9 and 10, and opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Another convention, Agricultural Waste Management 2002 with the theme "Business Opportunities in Agricultural Waste", organised by the Agricultural Institute of Malaysia in collaboration with Mardi, will also be held on Oct 2 and 3.

Saharan said the conference would highlight alternatives to transform agricultural by-products into profitable value-added goods, to reduce pollution.