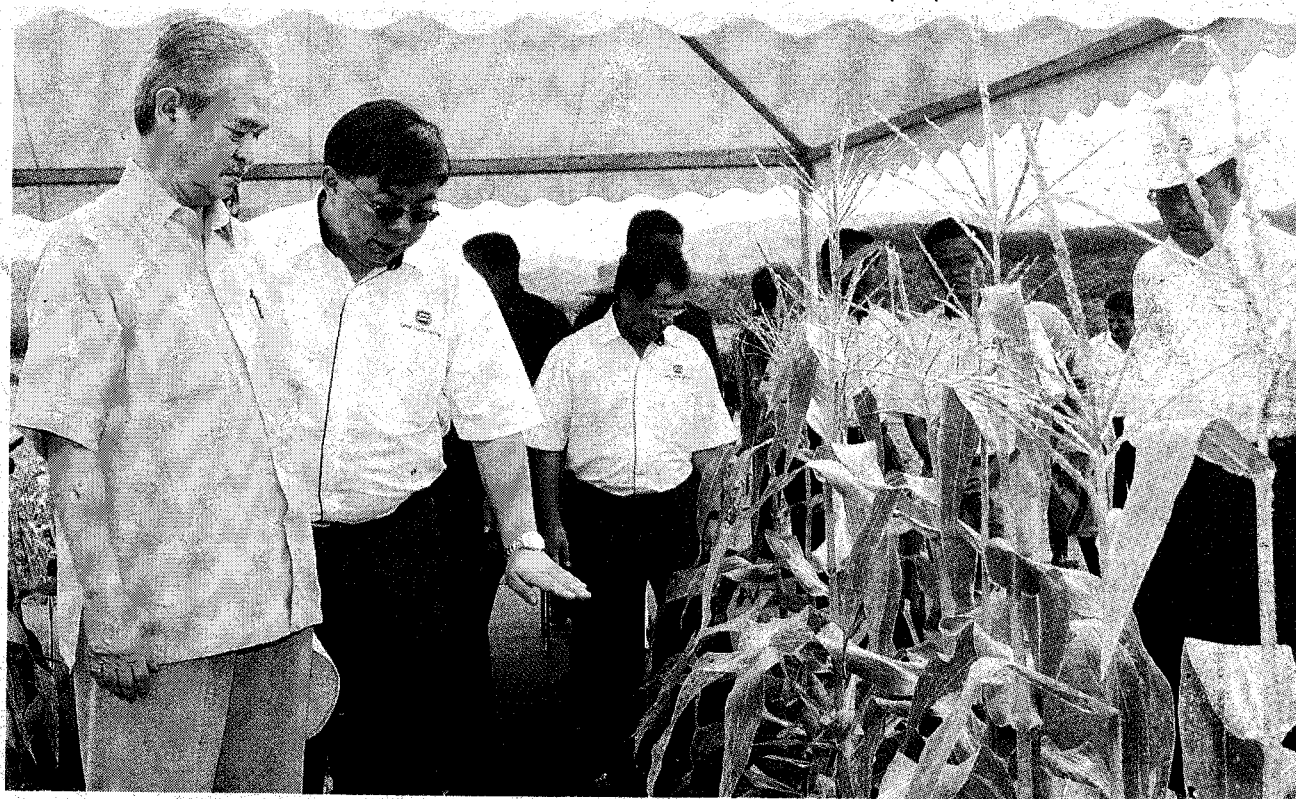


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# Grow more high-yield crops, urges Abdullah

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Sime Darby Berhad group chief executive officer Datuk Seri Ahmad Zubir Murshid (second from left) briefing Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the Sweet Corn Commercial Farming project in Changlun, Kedah, yesterday.

■ By Marina Emmanuel  
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**CHANGLUN:** The bountiful harvest of a pioneer commercial corn farming project under the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) in Bukit Tangga, Kedah, has prompted the prime minister to call for more quality high-yield crops to be cultivated.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said this was to ensure that farmers would benefit even if they were growing crops only on small plots of land. He also stressed the need to add value to farm produce.

"We must ensure that value is added to every single type of crop and factories are able to come up with innovative products from

these items," he said after visiting the Sweet Corn Commercial Farming project here.

Abdullah and his wife Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah were briefed on Sime Darby Berhad's Agropreneur Development Programme before touring a "Seed to Table" exhibition and the corn fields.

Also present were Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid, Sime Darby Berhad group chief executive officer Datuk Seri Ahmad Zubir Murshid and Sime Plantations Sdn Bhd managing director Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid.

Besides sampling sweet corn grown at the site, the guests were also served corn-based food that included *kueh*, bread, ice-cream

and popcorn, and beverages.

Commercial planting started in June. Up to 12,000 Zea Mays corn kernels are planted on every 0.4ha. It takes 60 to 70 days from seeding to harvest time.

Each crop can produce up to three harvests.

The project has yielded more than 100,000 cobs from the 80.9ha allocated to it since harvesting started last month.

Harvesting is carried out every other day. The cobs are packed in packets of twos and fives and sent to supermarkets daily.

In his speech, Azhar said Sime Farms Sdn Bhd would teach participants in the Agropreneur Development Programme about farm management, post-harvest management, marketing and en-

trepreneurship.

"Contributing to the technological development would be the Sime Darby Seeds Research and Development Centre, a partnership between Sime Plantations Sdn Bhd and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences," said Azhar.

"Farming in Malaysia is generally seen as a job with low returns for those with little or no education.

"We hope that through the Sweet Corn Commercial Farming Project, we will be able to modernise the image of the agricultural sector as well as improve the standard of living of farmers in Kedah."

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