International Kudos for MPOB

The Tech Museum of Innovation announced that a team from MPOB was one of the winners of the Environment Award sponsored by Intel Corp. Dr Ravigadevi Sambanthamurthi, Dr Kalyana Sundram and Dr Tan Yew Ai have made Malaysia proud by developing a technology that turns palm oil mill waste into health products with antioxidant and anti-cancer properties. This discovery exemplifies how the innovation of technology can be used for the benefit of humanity.

MPOB’s discovery of a sustainable solution to the serious environmental waste disposal challenge will entrench Malaysia’s leadership position amongst palm oil producing countries. The Tech Awards recognize individuals and organizations that develop or adapt technology to create solutions to global challenges with a high potential for yielding lasting beneficial impacts.

The Tech Awards are a cooperative effort of The Tech Museum of Innovation, in Silicon Valley; Santa Clara University’s Centre for Science, Technology and Society; and presenting sponsor applied materials. The Tech Awards accepted 460 applications from 59 countries for one of five different award categories: environment, education, equality, health and economic development.

The concept for the awards and the five award categories was inspired in part by the United Nations sponsored report, *The State of the Future at the Millennium*, which recommended award recognition as an effective way to accelerate scientific breakthroughs and technological applications to improve the human condition. The Tech Awards are run by The Tech Museum. The Tech Museum is a learning centre devoted to science and technology in the heart of Silicon Valley. The Intel Environment Award highlights innovators and their achievements committed to improving the environment, in line with the credo *Technology Benefiting Humanity*.

Other finalists in the environmental category included:

- Bill Lovin and Susan Lovelace of EstuaryLive in North Carolina who use live video-streaming and interactive audio via the Internet to connect the Rachel Carson National Estuary Reserve to school children all over the world;
- The International Sea Keepers Society in Florida which monitors ocean and marine atmospheric conditions worldwide and makes real-time data available to research institutions, government agencies and scientists throughout the world;
- Craig Taylor from Los Alamos National Laboratory, New Mexico who developed a technology that applies liquefied CO₂ in a closed-loop process that cleans silicon wafers in manufacturing integrated circuits, without consumption of water or release of toxic solvents; and
- Environment Canada, which has applied stable isotope technology in the analysis of bird migratory patterns, making it feasible to study the migratory connectivity of songbirds, as well as other migratory organisms.


Time for Malaysia to be Heard at WTO

MPOB has formalized a committee to assist the government during trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) levels. The committee will be preparing arguments for Malaysia to present at the new WTO round which will focus on agricultural issues. It is time for Malaysia to rise and be heard on the interference by certain developed countries that used numerous unscrupulous tactics to protect their farmers and agriculture sector.

Despite all the pledges made under the WTO in the interest of fair trade, these countries continue to exploit loopholes and flout the very principle that the trade body is established on. This goes to show that while the rhetoric might be suggesting intense commitment to free and fair trade, the realities are quite the opposite. If left to the market-place, the cycle will take care of itself but the problem arises when there is too much intervention in the market. Such interference often distorts supply and prices.
Recently, the US has increased the allocation under its new US Farm Law to about 80% to US$ 190 billion (US$1 = RM 3.80) to finance agriculture subsidies over the next five years. Other developed nations, including the European Union and Japan, are said to have also meddled in the market-place by imposing market distort support instruments. Such support instruments go against market rationale, pushing up production while prices keep tumbling.

Malaysia would also try to get India to reduce its high tariffs imposed on crude palm oil and palm olein compared to the lower tariffs the country imposes on crude and processed soyabean oil. Currently, India imposes 65% and 98% tariffs on Malaysian crude palm oil and palm olein, respectively, while imposing 45% and 50.8% tariffs on crude and processed soyabean oil. It is this kind of disparity that Malaysia is concerned with. This kind of practice goes against the grain of the WTO agreement.

While local producers are making huge profits from the high crude palm oil price, they should also at this point in time take the opportunity to look inwards at their operational capabilities. Local palm oil producers should take the necessary steps to increase their productivity and diversify into palm oil related products. Local producers should embrace newer oil extraction technology, which will definitely improve on the output. The technology currently used does not guarantee optimum oil extraction. The big producers must set an example for the smallholders to follow. Besides latest technology, local producers are also urged to replace their oil palm trees with trees from new clones which can produce up to 8 t of fresh fruit bunches per hectare per year.

**Quality Week 2002**

MPOB’s Quality Week was held from 5 - 13 October 2002. The activities for the week were:

- Q treasure hunt;
- Opening ceremony and Q-day;
- 3K-day (medical check-up, blood donation, talk on Occupational Safety and Health Act, and demonstration of safety);
- Annual dinner and award presentation;
- Family day; and
- Fishing competition.

During the week, MPOB presented the following categories of awards:

- Long Service Award (23 recipients);
- Awards for Best Office, Laboratory and Pilot Plant;
- Awards for Best Idea (Ideas Bank - two recipients);
- Awards for MPOB Service Innovation (five groups);
- Director-General’s Challenge Trophy for Excellence Service (two groups);
- Excellence Service Awards (79 recipients);
- Best Publication Awards;
- Director-General’s Challenge Trophy for Excellence in Research - won by Ramle Moslim et al. for the research on *Metarhizium in Controlling the Rhinoceros Beetle*;
- MPOB Gold Medal was awarded to Ab Gapor Md Top et al. for the research on *Vitamin E*.

**MPOB Open Day 2002**

MPOB held its first Open Day on 23 October 2002 from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, to provide an opportunity for the public to better understand the function and mission of MPOB to enhance the well being of the Malaysian palm oil industry.

Activities of the Open Day included:

- Visits to laboratories, pilot plants, oil palm gallery and exhibition;
- Licensing counter services, e-Submission and e-Registration;
- Cooking demonstrations on oil palm heart, bactris fruits and palm heart, margarine making and cooking using palm olein;
- Cooking competition based on palm oil products, flower arrangement based on oil palm materials, drawing and colouring competition;
• Tasting of palm-based ice cream, sausage (SaFar), bactris fruits and palm heart;
• Sale of palm oil products; and
• Lucky draws and quizzes.

The Open Day received an overwhelming response from the public, which included school children and teachers, university students and academicians, smallholders, oil palm entrepreneurs and many more.

Visitors were surprised with door gifts on a first-come-first-served basis. Free transport was provided to and from Serdang and UKM Commuter Stations and Headquarters.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SEMINARS, CONFERENCES AND COURSES

Oil Palm Plantation Management Course

The 11th Oil Palm Plantation Management Course (OPMC) was held from 13 - 27 October 2002 at Crown Princess Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. The OPMC which is under the Malaysian Technical Co-operation Programme (MTCP). MTCP was launched in 1980 to provide technical assistance to other developing countries. This course is regularly organized by MPOB jointly with Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia.

This course is intended for overseas personnel who hold important positions in agriculture, development work and research in oil palm. Participation in the course is strictly by invitation. No course fee is levied on invited participants from MTCP recipient countries. The course was attended by 19 participants from 16 countries, namely Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Laos, Myanmar, Nigeria, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Vietnam, Gambia, East Timor, Ecuador, Guinea, St. Lucia and Senegal.

The objectives of OPMC are to familiarize and expose participants to the whole spectrum of the oil palm industry in Malaysia including the current state of development and progress in all the major sectors of the industry; research and development in biology, especially in production and mechanization; and the latest technical information on the present and future production and technological innovations for the oil palm industry.

The 14-day course encompassed both lectures and field trips. Experts in specific subjects from MPOB and industry delivered a series of lectures, with emphasis on the Malaysian oil palm industry and its supporting R&D activities.

Persidangan Kebangsaan Pekebun Kedil Sawit 2002

The Conference, which was held from 31 October to 1 November 2002 at Putrajaya Marriott Hotel, was aimed at disseminating new findings on planting technology and recent developments in the oil palm industry. It included discussing and strategising plans to improve the productivity of smallholders, stepping-up awareness among smallholders on the importance of adopting the latest technologies, and providing an interaction forum for exchange of ideas and experiences among the smallholders, operating personnel and research officers.

Four keynote papers and 14 technical papers were delivered on plantation practices for elevating fresh fruit bunch production and quality, issues on the transfer of technology and activities towards improving the income of smallholders.

The Conference was participated by 312 smallholders, oil palm entrepreneurs, managers, estate supervisors, suppliers of agricultural inputs, academicians, officers from the extension and development agencies, viz. Pertubuhan Peladang Negeri, Pertubuhan Peladang Kawasan, Felda, Risda, Felcra, Salcra. An exhibition on oil palm planting technology and MPOB’s latest research findings was also held throughout the two-day conference.