Visit of the Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities to MPOB

Senator A Kohilan Pillay, the Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, and his delegation visited MPOB Head Office on 6 June 2008.

Dato’ Sabri Ahmad, the Chairman of MPOB, Dato’ Dr Mohd Basri Wahid, the Director-General and senior officials of MPOB greeted the arrival of the delegation.

A briefing on MPOB was given by the Director-General before the delegation proceeded to visit several research facilities in the MPOB complex, namely the Margarine Pilot Plant, the High Oleic Pilot Plant, the α-SME Pilot Plant, the Microbial Technology Engineering Centre (MICROTEC) and the Tissue Culture Laboratory.

Launching of a New Product and New Book

Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui, the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, launched a new product, namely INXBIO™, and a book written jointly by Dato’ Dr Mohd Basri Wahid, the Director-General of MPOB and Dr Kalanthi Nesaretnam, the Director of Product Development and Advisory Services, entitled Healthy Ageing with Tocotrienols – New Discoveries. This launching was in conjunction with the official opening of the Transfer of Technology Seminar on 17 June 2008.

The technology of the palm-based degreaser, branded INXBIO™, was jointly developed by MPOB and Millennium Partners Sdn Bhd. The product has expanded palm oil utilization into cleaning agents and solvents that have advantages in being less hazardous to consumers and are environmentally-friendly. The collaboration of MPOB with the company has resulted in bringing the technologies and innovations into the market.

The book entitled Healthy Ageing with Tocotrienols – New Discoveries, highlights research findings on the importance of diet and antioxidants in a preventive life-style. It also features the benefits of tocotrienols as preventive agents in many diseases and illnesses, and to ensure healthy ageing. Tocotrienols, which are abundantly found in palm oil, are powerful antioxidants of vitamin E.

MoA between MPOB and Two Companies

In conjunction with the official opening of the Transfer of Technology Seminar 2008, Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui, the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, also witnessed the signing of an agreement between MPOB and Ancom Crop Care Sdn Bhd on the Development of Glyphosate Formulations Using Palm-based Adjuvants and their Herbicidal Efficacy in Controlling Weeds. This collaborative project aims to develop and evaluate the palm-based adjuvant or blend adjuvant as an alternative to the conventional glyphosate formulations used for weed control.

MPOB also signed a memorandum of understanding with Innovax Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Chemical Company of Malaysia Berhad (CCM), on Oil Palm Phenolics-Based Products. This collaboration is to develop palm-based pharmaceutical products.

Official Opening of the Biotechnology Building

Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui, the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, also officially opened the MPOB Biotechnology Building in conjunction with the Transfer of Technology Seminar 2008. The MPOB Biotechnology Building houses the latest and state-of-the-art equipment to enable MPOB to carry out extensive research on biotechnology.

New research facilities such as the Genome Analysis Laboratory for Oil Palm (GALOP) will provide services in DNA fingerprinting and chromosome painting to the industry. The Oil Palm Genome research initiated by MPOB has sequenced a significant proportion (about 90%) of the oil palm genes. The gene sequence generated from the Oil Palm Genome project will provide the framework for large-scale functional analysis of thousands of genes using high throughput biotechnology techniques.

In conjunction with the official opening of the building, MPOB also produced a specially designed postage stamp. Dato’ Dr Mohd Basri Wahid, the Director-General of MPOB, presented the stamp to Datuk Peter Chin, Senator A Kohilan Pillay, the Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, and Dato’ Wira Ismail Saleh, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities.
MoU between MPOB and Asiatic Centre for Genome Technology Sdn Bhd (ACGT)

Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui, the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, witnessed a signing ceremony between MPOB and Asiatic Centre for Genome Technology Sdn Bhd (ACGT). The agreement is to collaborate and conduct research on oil palm genetics, and to identify and map its markers and genes.

The genetic map would enable MPOB scientists to address concerns such as dura contamination and oil palm-related diseases such as Ganoderma to improve yields.

Dialogue on Biofertilizer, Biogas and Effluent Treatment

A dialogue between Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui, the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, and captains of industry was held during the 2008 National Seminar on Biofertilizer, Biogas and Effluent Treatment in the Oil Palm Industry on 14 August 2008 at Seri Kembangan, Selangor.

The purpose of the dialogue was to get feedback on three issues relating to palm oil mill effluent (POME), that is biofertilizer, biogas and effluent treatment.

On biofertilizer: it is a well-known fact that the palm oil industry produces large amounts of POME and empty fruit bunches (EFB) that can be used for mulching and to produce compost.

On biogas: the world is concerned with greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which cause global warming. The POME ponds emit methane and have adversely affected the sustainable image of palm oil. With the utilization of methane for energy purposes, GHG emissions will be reduced by 57%.

The third issue was on effluent treatment to meet the very stringent regulations imposed by the Department of Environment (DOE). DOE specifies a very stringent level of 20 mg litre\(^{-1}\) (instead of the normal 100 mg litre\(^{-1}\)) for Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD).

Datuk Peter Chin wanted views from the industry on whether they could comply with the proposals and regulations on those three topics, i.e., biofertilizer, biogas and effluent treatment.

Course on Trading and Marketing of Palm Oil

For the first time ever, MPOB jointly with the Palm Oil Refiners’ Association of Malaysia (PORAM) organized an Introductory Course on Trading and Marketing of Palm Oil from 5 to 8 May 2008 at MPOB Head Office.

Dato’ Dr Mohd Basri Wahid, the Director-General of MPOB, opened the course officially.

The course was held to impart trading and marketing knowledge to participants who aspired towards a career in the palm oil industry and to those who wished to become skilled palm oil traders.

A total of 99 local and international participants attended the course. Twenty-two foreign participants came from countries such as Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.

The emphasis of the course was on aspects related to trading and marketing, and adequate focus was also given to key technical matters pertaining to the processing of palm and palm kernel oils. This was achieved through a series of lectures and field visits to plantations, as well as palm oil processing and handling facilities.

Transfer of Technology Seminar

Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui, the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, officially launched the Transfer of Technology (TOT) Seminar 2008 on 17 June 2008 at MPOB Head Office.

The TOT Seminar is organized by MPOB annually to ensure that the industry is kept aware of the latest research results available for adoption and commercialization. Adoption of new technologies will increase productivity, add value, generate wealth and contribute to the well-being of the oil palm industry in the country.

Since TOT was started, MPOB had launched 378 technologies/products and 23 services, while in 2008, 34 new technologies and products as well as 16 services were launched, increasing the number of technologies to 412 and services to 39 so far.

Also attending the event were Senator A Kohilan Pillay, the Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, Datuk Wira Ismail Saleh, the Secretary-General of the Ministry and Dato’ Sabri Ahmad, the Chairman of MPOB.
MPOB Graduate Students’ Assistantship Scheme Seminar

A total of 130 participants attended the MPOB Graduate Students’ Assistantship Scheme (GSAS) Seminar at MPOB Head Office on 19 June 2008. Dato’ Dr Mohd Basri Wahid, the Director-General of MPOB, officially opened the seminar.

The objectives of the seminar were:
- to emphasize on human capital development in order to enhance the nation’s capability to compete globally,
- to strengthen national unity, and
- to bring about a better distribution of income and wealth as well as a higher quality of life among the people.

So far, MPOB has sponsored 104 students under this scheme, and 50 of them have graduated and are currently serving and contributing to the nation in various sectors.

Seminar on the Progress of PS1 and PS2 Materials and Elite Germplasm

The 3rd Seminar on Progress of PS1 and PS2 Materials and Elite Germplasm 2008 was held on 15 July 2008 at MPOB Head Office, Bangi. The seminar was officiated by Dato’ Dr Mohd Basri Wahid, the Director-General of MPOB.

The one-day seminar attracted more than 140 participants from the industry, particularly from the plantation sector.

A total of nine papers were presented during the seminar, including five from MPOB. The MPOB papers presented were:

- A Review on Utilization and Performance of MPOB PS1 Series by Dr N Rajanaidu;
- Oil Palm Improvement Through Intercrossing Elaeis oleifera, Interspecific Hybridization and Backcrossing by Dr Mohd Din Amiruddin;
- Genetic Variation for Long Stalk and High Protein Kernel in Oil Palm Germplasm by Noh Ahmad;
- Molecular Screening of Oil Palm (Elaeis guineensis) Germplasm Collection using SSR Markers by Zulkefli Yaakub; and
- Oil Quality and Molecular Marker Technology in Oil Palm by Dr Mazura Ithnin.

The objective of the seminar was to disseminate to the plantation industry the latest findings and progress achieved on MPOB PS1 and PS2 planting materials and elite germplasm.

10th Intensive Diploma in Oil Palm Management and Technology

The closing ceremony and diploma presentation of the 10th Intensive Diploma in Oil Palm Management and Technology (IDOPMT) was held on 28 July 2008 at the Equatorial Hotel, Bangi.

Dato’ Dr Mohd Basri Wahid, the Director-General MPOB, presented diplomas to 21 participants from various local and international organizations.

The course was organized to disseminate knowledge on the latest technologies in the palm oil industry, and included discussions and interaction with expertise from the various sectors.

The three-month programme comprised lectures, demonstrations, briefings, field trips and practical training in several plantations.

Since 1999, 222 participants from 56 organizations from Malaysia and other countries had attended IDOPMT.

Farm Mechanization Operator Course

The 4th Farm Mechanization Operator Course produced a total of 20 graduates who participated in the course from March to August 2008.

Senator A Kohilan Pillay, the Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, presented certificates to all the participants on 7 August 2008 at MPOB Head Office, Bangi.

Three participants were chosen as the best students and received awards during the certificate presentation function.

This course was organized to train participants in farm mechanization practices in the oil palm plantations in order to increase labour productivity and reduce labour dependence in oil palm field operations.

Palm Oil Familiarization Programme

The 28th Palm Oil Familiarization Programme (POFP) was officiated by Senator A Kohilan Pillay, the Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, on 12 August 2008 at the Prince Hotel & Residence, Kuala Lumpur.
A total of 48 participants from 20 countries such as Colombia, Djibouti, Egypt, Liberia, Nepal and Malaysia took part in the 11-day programme.

MPOB and the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister’s Department jointly sponsored the programme under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP).

The POFP is designed to be the platform where information on palm oil is passed on and shared with consuming countries. It aims at familiarizing and exposing participants to the whole spectrum of the palm oil industry in Malaysia, including current developments in all major sectors, latest applications of palm oil downstream products and commercial aspects of the palm oil trade.

This programme includes lectures, demonstrations, briefings, field trips and interaction with members of the industry.

Since 1982, a total of 904 participants from 90 countries have attended the programme.

National Seminar on Biofertilizer, Biogas and Effluent Treatment

The 2008 National Seminar on Biofertilizer, Biogas and Effluent Treatment in the Oil Palm Industry was officiated by Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui, the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, on 14 August 2008 at The Mines Beach Resort and Spa, Seri Kembangan, Selangor.

The seminar was the first of its kind to be organized by MPOB to provide a platform for deliberations on issues and prospects of biofertilizer, biogas and effluent treatment in the oil palm industry. It attracted 350 participants from all over Malaysia.

Among the objectives of the seminar were:

• to promote the production and application of organic fertilizer from biomass and waste of oil palm;
• to increase the use of organic fertilizer from locally produced materials;
• to minimize potential environmental damage; and
• to highlight relevant and latest technologies in biocomposting, biogas utilization and effluent treatment that may contribute to the sustainability of the palm oil industry.

During the seminar, Datuk Peter Chin witnessed the signing of two agreements between MPOB with All Cosmos Marketing Sdn Bhd and with Hur Far Engineering Works Sdn Bhd for the licensing of fertilizer formulation, and for the development of the process system for the production of palm-based bio-compound fertilizer.

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