Briefing on the Palm Oil Industry and NKEA of the Palm Oil Sector

A briefing on the palm oil industry and the National Key Economic Areas (NKEA) of the palm oil sector was given to the Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Council (BNBBC) on 28 March at the Hilton Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. Among those who attended the briefing were Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities; Dato' Seri Utama Shahrir Abdul Samad, Chairman of MPOB; Datuk Dr Choo Yuen May, Director-General of MPOB; Directors of MPOB and members of BNNBC.

The briefing was given by the Director-General of MPOB.

Among others, the audience were briefed on the achievement of MPOB and the industry, and on the eight Entry Point Projects (EPP) under NKEA of the palm oil sector, namely (1) Accelerating the Replanting of Oil Palm; (2) Improving Fresh Fruit Bunch Yield; (3) Improving Worker Productivity; (4) Increasing the Oil Extraction Rate; (5) Developing Biogas at Palm Oil Mills; (6) Developing Oleo Derivatives; (7) Commercialising Second Generation Biofuels; and (8) Expediting Growth in Food and Health-based Downstream Segment.

Dialogue between MPOB Chairman and Smallholders

MPOB organised a dialogue between Dato’ Seri Utama Shahrir Abdul Samad, Chairman of MPOB and oil palm smallholders in April this year. The dialogue was held in different sessions at various places in Sarawak, namely, Sadong Jaya, Betong, Batu Niah and Bekenu.

In his opening address, Dato’ Shahrir encouraged all smallholders to adopt new technologies and apply good agricultural practices to ensure a higher income. This will in turn help the government in its efforts to transform Malaysia into a high income nation through the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) by the year 2020.

He said that the government has identified the palm oil sector as one of the catalysts in NKEA with the introduction of the eight EPP (listed above) covering both the upstream sector which seeks to increase the productivity, as well as the downstream sector which aims to produce value-added products for the industry.

Currently, to enhance the contribution by the smallholders in increasing oil palm productivity, the government has to speed up its efforts in implementing the oil palm replanting scheme which caters to palms which are 25 years of age or older. MPOB has launched a new replanting scheme which provides RM 7000 per hectare to the smallholders to replant.

Licensing of Palm Oil Transporters

Oil palm tankers and movers are now required to obtain a license from MPOB, starting from 3 March this year. This new regulation introduced by MPOB is to ensure that the food safety of palm oil is not compromised during transportation of the oil, and thus the quality of foods produced from palm oil will not be affected.

Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, commented during the official launching of the Licensing of Palm Oil Transporters that MPOB through its enforcement and licensing activities will ensure that the nation’s palm oil industry will continue to develop and be nurtured systemically.

According to Tan Sri Bernard, the ministry is working closely with MPOB to ensure that the palm oil supply chain is not compromised in terms of transportation safety and food safety regulations. This will be achieved through such activities as prevention, and MPOB will not hesitate to take strict action against any activity that can compromise the quality of Malaysian palm oil. He also identified that one of the main activities that can jeopardise the palm oil industry is that of siphoning off palm oil during transportation by the tankers.

To address this problem, the Ministry and MPOB have already implemented a new system of locating palm oil transporters through the use of the global positioning system (GPS). It is hoped that with this new system, all the tankers can be monitored from the mills to their respective destinations without worrying over the illegal transfer (theft) of palm oil en route.
Up until the year 2010, 39 cases of illegal transfer of palm oil have been reported, which involved the disappearance of 252.7 t of palm oil with an estimated worth of about RM 674 000.

**Launching of Pusat Latihan Sawit Malaysia (PLASMA), Keratong**

MPOB’s *Pusat Latihan Industri Sawit* (PLASMA) was officially launched by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, in Keratong recently. PLASMA will train local skilled workers in the plantation sector, giving emphasis to the maintenance and operating procedures of farm mechanisation.

PLASMA Keratong is the second campus that has been developed by MPOB after PLASMA Lahad Datu which has been operational since 2006. At a cost of RM 36 million, PLASMA Keratong is the main campus which can cater for up to 100 students at one time, and has facilities such as an administration block, assembly hall, lecture block, mechanisation workshop, hostel and numerous other amenities related to oil palm mechanisation.

Tan Sri Bernard hoped that with the introduction of the oil palm plantation courses at PLASMA, the local youth will take up this opportunity to gain knowledge and expertise to develop a more creative and innovative approach in the plantation sector. The Minister also expected that the local people will replace the majority of foreign workers working in the oil palm plantation sector by the year 2020.

Apart from Tan Sri Bernard, the event was also attended by Senator Dato’ Maznah Mazlan, Deputy Minister of Human Resources; Dato’ Seri Utama Shahrir Abdul Samad, Chairman of MPOB; Datuk Paduka Nurmala Abdul Rahim, Secretary General of the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities and Datuk Dr Choo Yuen May, Director-General of MPOB.

**Launching of Sustainable Palm Oil Co-operatives**

Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, launched the Kuala Selangor Selatan Sustainable Palm Oil Co-operative in Kuala Selangor, Selangor on 10 May 2011. Dato’ Seri Utama Shahrir Abdul Samad, Chairman of MPOB and Tuan Haji Idris Omar, Director of the Integration Research and Extension Division of MPOB, also attended the occasion.

The Minister launched another sustainable palm oil co-operative in Beluran, Sabah on 27 June 2011. Datuk Dr Choo Yuen May, Director-General of MPOB and Tuan Haji Idris Omar, accompanied the Minister to the event.

Apart from these, MPOB had launched sustainable palm oil co-operatives in Tongod and Kunak in Sabah, in Saratok, Sarawak; in Jasin, Melaka and in Kluang, Johor.

The objectives of the co-operatives are to group independent oil palm smallholders into clusters to facilitate their efforts at increasing productivity through good agricultural practices, and at the same time at improving the quality of the fresh fruit bunches so as to result in an increase in their income within the sustainability guidelines.

**Closing Ceremony and Certificate Presentation of the Farm Mechanisation Operators Course**

MPOB organised a certificate presentation and closing ceremony for Farm Mechanisation Operators Course (KOML) on 28 July 2011 at MPOB’s *Pusat Latihan Sawit Malaysia* (PLASMA), Keratong.

This 10th edition of the certificate presentation was closed by Dato’ Hamzah Zainudin, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities. A total of 38 KOML graduates were presented with their certificates.

Certificates are given to candidates who have completed their Level 2 training programme which lasts about six months, including a one-month attachment to commercial estates. The KOML graduates are awarded two certificates, namely, *Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia* (SKM) Level 2 and Certificate of the Institute of Malaysian Plantation and Commodities (IMPAC).

Muhammad Ridwan Hamzah was pronounced the best student for the 10th edition of KOML Level 2 based on his excellent examination results and good attitude. To date, all the graduates of the 10th edition intake have been offered jobs by the industry.

The function was also attended by Dr Ahmad Kushairi Din, MPOB’s Deputy Director-General (R&D); MPOB Directors, KOML lecturers, industry representatives from the surrounding estates and government agencies, as well as the parents of the students.

**B5 Implementation Programme in the Central Region**

B5 is a blend of 5% biodiesel and 95% diesel. Biodiesel is produced from palm oil. This alternative fuel was first tested on government-owned vehicles
during the initial trials before it was made available at the petrol stations.

The B5 programme in Malaysia is being implemented on a regional basis, starting in the Central Region which involved five states, i.e. Putrajaya, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

The first launching of B5 and a press conference were held successfully in Putrajaya on 1 June 2011 at the Petronas Petrol Station, Precint 9D, Putrajaya, officiated by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities.

The second launching of B5 was held successfully in Melaka on 1 July 2011 at the Shell Petrol Station, RA Talang, Ayer Keroh, Melaka, officiated by Dato’ Seri Muhamad Ali Rustam, Chief Minister of Melaka, with Dato’ Seri Utama Shahrir Abdul Samad, Chairman of MPOB, in attendance. A working visit to the Petronas Melaka Refinery, Tangga Batu, was also carried out after the launch to physically look into the progress of technical works for the setting up of in-line blending facilities at the terminal.

The third launching of B5 in Negeri Sembilan on 1 August 2011 at Esso Persiaran Senawang FS, Lot 901, Pekan Senawang, Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, was officiated by Dato’ Hamzah Zainudin, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities. A working visit to the Esso Port Dickson Terminal was also carried out after the launch.

At this initial stage, the deployment of B5 will cover the land transport sector, which encompasses private cars, vehicles in the civil service as well as commercial vehicles. From 1 November 2011, B5 will begin to cover the industrial and fisheries sectors as well.

To ensure the success of the programme, the government, through MPOB, has allocated a sum of RM 43.1 million to finance the development of in-line blending facilities at six petroleum depots in the Central Region.

Establishment of OECD-GLP Facilities in AOTD to Meet EU-REACH Requirements

The Advanced Oleochemical Technology Division (AOTD) of MPOB has established a working partnership with the European Union (EU) on a new European Community Regulation on chemicals and their safe use. For this new law concerning chemicals, EU has introduced legislation on the need for the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) substances. The law was implemented on 1 June 2007, and MPOB has been obligated by this new ruling to obtain information on the physico-chemical, health and environmental properties of the substances under its jurisdiction, and to use this information to determine how these substances can be used safely.

Steps have been taken by MPOB to further strengthen this cooperation by sending MPOB’s research officers to pursue post-graduate training at a European university, and by sending its research officers to numerous other institutions to undergo training in the fields related to the oleochemical industry.

With these measures completed, AOTD is now ready to establish OECD-GLP Ecotoxicity and Toxicity Laboratories to meet EU-REACH requirements. These laboratories are to be fully equipped with facilities and will be operated by MPOB personnel in AOTD’s new building by January 2012.

Training on Indirect Land Use Change (iLUC) at the Free University of Brussels, Belgium

A team of two research officers and two assistant research officers from the Techno-Economics Unit of the Economic and Industry Development Division, MPOB, underwent training on practical general equilibrium modeling (GEM) using the General Algebraic Models software (GAMS) at the Free University of Brussels in Belgium from 11-15 July 2011.

The team was involved in a project related to indirect land use change (iLUC). The project used the GEM concept as it appeared to be suitable for studying the effects of iLUC while GAMS was used as the software to run the iLUC GEM model.

Ten countries, including Malaysia, participated in the training course with guidance from expert instructors. The participants also formed an alumni network of modelers who represent international and national institutions, central banks, government agencies, universities, companies and individual economists from 122 countries.

Master Class on Greenhouse Gas Emission Measurement Techniques

A Master Class on Greenhouse Gas Emission Measurement Techniques was held from 27 June – 7 July 2011 by the Malaysia-Netherlands Joint Committee on Carbon Emission at Wageningen University, The Netherlands. This Master Class was attended by nine participants from Malaysia, with five from MPOB, three from the Tropical Peat
Research Laboratory (TPRL), Sarawak, and one participant from Universiti Putra Malaysia.

The class focused on theoretical and practical work, as well as field excursions, on the measurement of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission.

Participants were given a clear basic understanding of carbon stocks and carbon emissions which are related to carbon balance studies during the theory classes. Participants also received training on the techniques for measuring soil gas respiration, photosynthesis and leaf fluorescence, as well as leaf area index measurements. Field excursions were made to different study sites in the Netherlands, such as the 24-m flux tower at Loobos research site, an airplane flight for airborne flux measurement at Teuge, and the super research site at Cabauw where various GHG were measured using various techniques.

The course was beneficial in enhancing and sharing knowledge between institutions on methods for measurements and analyses of data in GHG emission studies.

Road Shows on e-COST and e-LABOUR

The Techno-Economic Unit of MPOB has been conducting a series of road shows to promote e-COST. The e-Cost is an online system for filling up the annual cost of production survey questionnaires. The objective of the road shows is to assist estate owners in filling up the required data via online.

The first road show was conducted in July 2011 at MPOB Head Office, Bangi. In September 2011, another six road shows will be conducted in Sabah, Sarawak, Johor, Pahang and Perak. After completion of the road shows on e-COST, the Unit will conduct road shows on e-LABOUR. The e-LABOUR which was started in April 2011 also involves all estates in Malaysia. This system requires the estate owners to submit data on the number of workers by job category to MPOB. By having the road shows, it is expected that estate owners will become more familiar with the two online surveys.

Ministerial Mission to Australia to Lobby against the Law on Palm Oil Labelling

A working mission, headed by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, was in Australia from 24 July to 2 August 2011 to lobby against a parliamentary move to legislate the labelling of palm oil in food products.

There were also discussions with relevant parties regarding Malaysia’s concern over the proposed labelling law, Truth in Labelling Laws – Palm Oil Bill 2011, which was passed by the Australian Senate on 23 June 2011 and is now under consideration by the House of Representatives. The bill requires products to carry information on palm oil content although all other vegetable oils in food products are exempt from such labelling. Thus, Malaysia views this proposed law as a move to discriminate against palm oil and to limit its market access.

Accompanying Tan Sri Bernard on this crucial mission were Mr M Nagarajan, Deputy Secretary General (Commodities); Dato’ Seri Utama Shahrir Abdul Samad, Chairman of MPOB; Datuk Dr Choo Yuen May, Director-General of MPOB; Tan Sri Datuk Dr Yusof Basiron, Chief Executive Officer of MPOC; Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi, the Kapit Member of Parliament; Datin Linda Tsen Thau Lin, Batu Sapi Member of Parliament and Mr Zulkifli Mohd Nazim, Secretary General of the National Association of Small Holders (NASH).

During the official visits to Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, the Minister had meetings with the State Ministers for Health and the Department of Primary Industry; the Ministers of Manufacturing Export and Trade; Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Department of Environment and Heritage; the Minister for Health and Ageing; the Minister for Trade and the Governor General of Victoria State. In addition, Tan Sri Dompok met with the Australian Members of Parliament, representatives of the Food and Grocery Council, and with consumers to reiterate Malaysia’s commitment to ensuring the sustainable development of oil palm as well as to highlight the nutritional benefits of palm oil.

Technical Working Visits to European Commission and Joint Research Centre

Datuk Dr Choo Yuen May, the Director-General of MPOB, led the technical working visit to the European Commission (EC) in Brussels, Belgium on 23 September 2011 and Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Ispra, Italy on 26 September 2011. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the sustainability criteria under the Renewable Energy Directive to ensure that market access of palm biodiesel to Europe is not adversely affected. The working visit is to follow up on the earlier technical working visits to discuss the scientific data on palm-based biofuels to be used for calculation of GHG emission savings. EC was represented by Mr Hans van Steen and
Mr Ewout Deurwaardeer from the Directorate General of Energy. The JRC was led by Dr Heinz Ossenbrink, Head of Unit, Renewable Energy, Institute for Energy.

The technical working visit successfully explained the measures practised in the country to ensure sustainable development of the Malaysian oil palm industry to the authorities involved in the formulation of the Directive. Both EC and JRC were impressed with the MPOB life cycle assessment (LCA) study on palm biodiesel that had been accepted by an international panel and published in international journals. EC and JRC also welcome the continuous interaction and good working relationship with MPOB, particularly in addressing the sustainability concerns under the Directive. The visit also enhances the good working relationship with JRC for possible collaboration in research projects for the benefit of the oil palm industry.

**Working Visit to the United States of America by the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, Malaysia**

The working visit of Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, Malaysia to USA from 27 September to 1 October 2011 coincided with the 7th Global Oils and Fats Forum (GOFF) organised by the American Palm Oil Council (APOC). The ministerial delegation led by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok was accompanied by Datuk Dr Choo Yuen May, Director General of MPOB; Tan Sri Dr Yusof Basiron, CEO of Malaysian Palm Oil Council (MPOC); Mr Cheah Kam Huan, CEO of Malaysian Timber Council (MTC); Mr Aknan Ehtook, Under Secretary (BISS); Ms Georgina L George, Special Officer to the Minister, and Ms Siti Syaliza Mustapha, Director of Public and Corporate Affairs of MTC.

GOFF 7 is a biennial forum organised by APOC to provide a worldwide perspective on oils and fats, their trends and opportunities as well as updates on new developments, technical applications, formulations and latest progress in the biodiesel industry. This year, GOFF 7 was held in Gaylord National Resort and Convention Centre, National Harbour, Maryland from 29 - 30 September 2011.

Besides GOFF, the working visit also included a roundtable discussion with International Wood Products Association, meeting with LMC International, briefing by Orion Genomics and a stopover at the University of Maryland.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, MEETINGS AND COURSES**

**Conference on New Business Opportunities in Oleochemical, Biomass and Nutraceutical Sectors**

A Conference on New Business Opportunities in Oleochemicals, Biomass and Nutraceuticals was recently hosted by MPOB and the Palm Oil Industry Cluster Sabah (POIC Sabah Sdn Bhd) on 1 March 2011.

The objective of this Conference was to inform industry members, investors and those in the small and medium industries (SMI) of the business opportunities available in the downstream palm oil industry, such as oleochemicals, biomass and value-added products. There were two main sessions: Session 1 - Value-added Consumer Products and Session 2 - Oil Palm Biomass: Between Opportunities and Challenges.

Over the years, MPOB has encouraged the palm oil industry to focus on the development of value-added intermediates and fine chemicals based on basic oleochemicals. The resulting products will go into several industry sectors, such as those covering agrochemicals, surfactants, biolubricants, biopolymers and glycerol derivatives. To support this development, MPOB is also focusing on helping these industries through the development of OECD-GLP compliant laboratories to meet the EU-REACH requirements.

The nutraceutical sector was also highlighted during the Conference. A study had been conducted by MPOB which showed that during the process of milling and refining, a substantial amount of lipids and water-soluble phytonutrients was often lost. What were lost along with the lipids were carotenoids, vitamins E, sterols, squalene and coenzyme Q, all of which are important in the nutraceutical sector.

Another topic highlighted at the Conference was the biomass sector. This sector has created new niches in the furniture, fertiliser and renewable energy subsectors. Examples of recent developments highlighted during the Conference were palm-based lumber for furniture, pulp for paper and food packaging, particleboards, eco-pallets for transportation, fibre-filled plastic composite for automobile components, biocompost for use as organic fertiliser, and renewable energy at the mill.
PAC Meeting

The 31st Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting was held from 4 to 8 April 2011 at the MPOB Head Office in Bangi. This annual event enables the research activities of MPOB to be scrutinised by an external body, comprising professionals who are experts in their respective fields, to ensure that the projects are technically sound and are in line with the needs of the industry and country.

During the PAC meeting, Dato’ Seri Utama Shahrir Abdul Samad, Chairman of MPOB, hosted a dinner in honour of the PAC members. On the final day, the PAC members were taken to visit a palm biodiesel factory in Carey Island, Banting, Selangor.

PAC Seminar

More than 300 participants attended a half-day Seminar on 7 April 2011 which was held in conjunction with the 31st PAC meeting. The venue of the Seminar was Bactris Hall in MPOB Head Office.

The Seminar was organised into six sessions, as follows:

- Session 1: Development of High-yielding Varieties of Rice: Reflections on Oil Palm Breeding by Gurdev S Khush, University of California, USA;
- Session 3: Formulating for Stability: How an Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico Helps the Cosmetic Industry to Create Greener Formulations by Johann W Wiechers, JW Solutions, The Netherlands;
- Session 4: Saturated Fat Reduction in Food Products by Kevin Warren Smith, Fat Science Consulting Ltd, United Kingdom;
- Session 5: Global Economic Scenario and its Impact on Commodity Prices by Zakiah Abdul Rashid, Malaysian Institute of Economic Research, Malaysia; and
- Session 6: Comparing the Experiences of the Malaysian and Indonesian Oil Palm Sectors over the Past Years by James Fry, LMC International Ltd, United Kingdom.

The Seminar was held to disseminate as well as to gain knowledge in the latest developments of the oil palm industry.

National Seminar on Biogas and Palm Oil Mill Effluent Treatment

The abundance of wastes from palm oil mills can create many opportunities in the palm oil sector. This is possible with the technology to convert wastes from oil palm fruits into a source of electric power.

The enormous amounts of empty fruit bunches and palm oil mill effluent open up opportunities for the palm oil mill owner to become an independent power producer (IPP) through biogas generation from the process of trapping biogas, according to Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, at the official launching of National Biogas and Effluent Treatment Seminar on 6-7 June 2011 in Kota Kinabalu.

Efforts at obtaining renewable energy from oil palm fruit wastes are in line with the government’s initiative to promote increased usage of green technology and less reliance on energy coming from fossil fuels. According to Tan Sri Bernard, besides producing electricity, the method of trapping biogas can also render the environment cleaner by reducing carbon emission into the atmosphere.

Based on a study conducted by MPOB, there are currently 38 palm oil mills that have facilities to trap biogas, while another 34 palm oil mills are in the midst of installing this facility. The process of biogas trapping has also been identified and lauded by the government as a means to save cost in accordance with the government policy set out in NKEA.

During the Seminar, the Minister presented diplomas to the students of MPOB’s Diploma Course in Palm Processing. This diploma course was initiated by the Institute of Malaysian Plantation and Commodities (IMPAC) with the cooperation of the ministry.

Workshop on Orange Spotting CCCVd of Oil Palm

A Workshop on Orange Spotting CCCVd of Oil Palm was recently conducted by MPOB from 8 - 9 June 2011 at the Palm Garden IOI Resort, Putrajaya.

The objective of this Workshop was to highlight the potential threat by the orange spotting (OS) disease caused by a variant of the coconut cadang-cadang viroid (CCCVd) as the oil palm plantations in Malaysia enter their third generation of planting. To address this issue, a total of 52 participants attended the Workshop from various backgrounds,
including members from the oil palm industry, legislative department, universities and MPOB.

Four prominent speakers were invited to present papers, namely, Professor Dr John Randles, Dr Dagmar Hanold, Dr Julie Flood and Dr Ganesan Vadamalai. They deliberated on and reviewed the current research progress in orange spotting, focusing on the history, diagnostic tools and biosecurity programme of CCCVd. During the discussion at the Workshop, it was proposed that a grace period of three years be recommended to address all the knowledge gaps that had been identified during the Workshop.

In another development, the Department of Agriculture declared that the phytosanitary regulations will be temporarily deferred until December 2013. The Department of Agriculture along with MPOB and Universiti Putra Malaysia will work together to address the crucial information gaps relating to CCCVd. The Workshop had been an excellent platform for sharing knowledge, exchanging ideas, gathering new insights and networking.

Transfer of Technology Seminar 2011

MPOB organises an annual event which is the Transfer of Technology (TOT) Seminar. MPOB has, over the years, hosted and organised the TOT Seminar as a strategic platform for launching new technologies, products and services in all aspects of oil palm and palm oil for adoption and commercialisation by the industry and entrepreneurs. This event also enables potential interested parties, which consist of industry players, entrepreneurs and plantation owners, to interact and exchange ideas with MPOB’s inventors and scientists on the commercialisation of the technologies.

A total of 300 participants from the industry attended this year’s seminar on 23 June 2011. The opening ceremony was officiated by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities. The Seminar introduced 25 new technologies and 14 new services. These included farm machinery, food and non-food formulations, oleochemicals, biomass utilisation, green energy, milling and processing.

MPOB also announced and launched a publication highlighting research findings in the Life Cycle Assessment for Palm Oil and Palm Biodiesel, a project requested by the industry. Apart from this, a new product, Enhanced Bio Organic Fertiliser (TKJ Organicplus) was launched during the event.

Agreements were signed between MPOB and All Cosmos Bio-Tech Holding Corporation (ACBT) for the commercialisation of Co-Active Biofertiliser GanoEF1 for Controlling Ganoderma in Oil Palm, and with Nafas Jentera Sdn Bhd on the Production and Marketing of Oil Palm Fresh Fruit Bunch Motorised Cutter (Cantas™).

To date, the total number of technologies and services launched for adoption and commercialisation stand at 500 technologies and 106 services.

GSAS Seminar

MPOB recently organised the Fourth Graduate Students Assistantship Scheme (GSAS) Seminar which was held at MPOB Head Office in Bangi on 24 June 2011. The event was officially launched by Datuk Dr Choo Yuen May, Director-General of MPOB.

In her opening speech, Datuk Dr Choo said that MPOB has allocated RM 7.5 million for the purpose of developing new human resources specialising in those fields of research and development related to the palm oil industry. Since 1995, MPOB had established a fund which is called MPOB GSAS, and has sponsored a total of 129 students to pursue advanced studies at local universities.

This year’s GSAS Seminar focused on downstream activities covered by projects that had been completed by the students sponsored under the scheme. A total of five papers were presented:

- Genetic Diversity of Central and South American Wild Oil Palm (Elaeis oleifera) Populations Using Microsatellite Markers;
- Integration of the Genetic Linkage and Cytogenetic Maps of Oil Palm (Elaeis guineensis Jacq.);
- Development of Microspore Culture for Producing Oil Palm Haploid;
- Standardisation and Fingerprinting of Oil Palm Phenolics via Biochemical and Gene Expression Studies; and
- Identification and Analysis of Two Genes Differentially Expressed in Spear Leaves of High and Low Yielding Oil Palm.

Some of the papers were presented by MPOB’s senior researchers, while others were presented by the GSAS graduates themselves.

Through GSAS, MPOB has contributed towards the development of a qualified and skilled workforce in various scientific fields, thus enhancing the good relationship between the universities and industry with MPOB.
The 34th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

The 34th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), held at the Centre International de Conferences, Geneva, Switzerland from 4 to 9 July 2011; was attended by 625 delegates from 145 member countries, one member organisation (European Union) and 34 governmental and non-governmental organisations, including UN agencies. The four-member Malaysian delegation was from the Ministry of Health (Ms Fauziah Arshad and Ms Noraini Mohd Othman) and MPOB (Dr Kalanithi Nesaretnam, Director of Product Development and Advisory Services; and Dr Nagendran Balasundram, MPOB Regional Manager, Europe).

During this session of the CAC, a total of 17 agenda items were discussed and more than 50 draft standards, guidelines or related texts were adopted at various steps. Issues of interest to Malaysia pertained to matters referred to the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO), Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) and Codex Committee on Food Additives (CCFA).

2nd International Conference on Tocotrienols and Chronic Diseases

MPOB once again successfully organised an International Conference on Tocotrienols and Chronic Diseases from 13 – 14 July 2011 at Wynn Hotel, Las Vegas, USA. The main objective of this Conference was to highlight and deliberate on the latest research findings on the health benefits of tocotrienols.

The two-day Conference featured an impressive line-up of 31 speakers invited from all over the world. These are renowned professors and researchers who have spent many years studying the palm tocotrienol/tocopherol complex – the only source of tocotrienol with the most science and scientific publications.

The Conference was attended by key researchers in neuroprotection, such as Professor Chandan Sen, Dr Cameron Rink and Dr Savita Khanna from Ohio State University, and Professor Bharat Aggarwal from MD Anderson Cancer Center speaking on tocotrienol and inflammation; Professor David Heber from the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition speaking on the clinical perspective of tocotrienol as a cholesterol-lowering agent; as well as Professor Yuen Kah Hay and Dr Enrico Magosso from Universiti Sains Malaysia giving interesting presentations on recent findings from tocotrienol clinical trials.

While the first session focused on clinical applications, the second and third sessions placed great emphasis on the basic science and mechanistic studies of tocotrienol. Invited speakers included Dr Fabio Virgili and Dr Francesco Galli from Italy, Dr Nesrin Kartal Ozer from Turkey, Professor Ki Baik Haem from South Korea, Professor Dipak Das from USA and many more. Representatives from MPOB also showed high enthusiasm in tocotrienol research, and papers were presented by Dr Kalanithi Nesaretnam on tocotrienols and breast cancer, Dr Fu Ju Yen on nano-formulation of tocotrienols, and Zaizuhana Shahrim on tocotrienol and wound healing, while an insight into the production process of palm tocotrienols was presented by Dr Harrison Lau.

The Conference was also attended by tocotrienol manufacturers and marketing associates who gave interesting presentations in Session 4 themed From Laboratory to the Market. This session was preceded by a forum, chaired by John Low, Director of Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU), to discuss the roadmap of tocotrienols research for the next five years. The forum yielded a fruitful dialogue with topics ranging from research directions and communication to future collaboration.

The Conference provided an excellent opportunity for all tocotrienol experts to gather and share their most recent findings. While it was the best occasion for knowledge sharing and exchange of ideas, the Conference also provided a platform for the team to work together towards the goal of research excellence in tocotrienols through national and international collaboration.

Euro Fed Lipid Congress 2011

The Euro Fed Lipid Congress is a major oils and fats congress in Europe and attracts the participation of European oils and fats industry, as well as academics and researchers involved in various aspects of oils and fats research. This year’s Congress was attended by nearly 600 participants from some 50 countries.

The Congress for the first time ever, focused on sustainability. The sustainable development of the Malaysian oil palm sector was discussed by participants from the Malaysian industry and consumers of Malaysian palm oil in Europe. This development reflects the awareness of researchers and users of oils and fats, that sustainable development requires scientific evaluations and not be approached based solely on emotions and publicity generated by parties with ulterior motives.
The choice of Rotterdam as the venue of this Congress was quite appropriate as it is the oils and fats processing centre of Europe, and it is estimated to hold about one-fourth of Europe’s estimated 16 million tonnes vegetable oil processing capacity. It is also estimated that a total of 3 million tonnes of palm oil are processed here annually. Also noteworthy is that some of Malaysia’s leading oil palm company’s such as Sime Darby and IOI operate in Rotterdam.

Datuk Dr Choo Yuen May, Director-General of MPOB presented a paper entitled Malaysian Government’s Efforts Towards Sustainability at the 9th Euro Fed Lipid Congress in Rotterdam, Netherlands, which was held from 18-21 September 2011.

The Director-General explained the Malaysian government has taken the necessary steps to ensure that the country’s oil industry implements sustainable practices, through the development of a comprehensive and balanced approach to 3-Ps- People (development that benefit the general population), Planet (emphasis on environmentally friendly practices) and Profit (generation of profits for the development of national economy).

She also noted that the Malaysian government is currently implementing the New Economic Model through the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), which has identified the oil palm sector as one of 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEA). She stressed that the government has identified eight Entry Point Projects (EPP) which will increase the Gross National Income. Five of the EPP concentrate in the upstream sector, while three EPP focus on the downstream sector.

Dr Kalanithi Nesaretnem, Director of MPOB’s Product Development and Advisory Services Division and several MPOB researchers also presented their research findings on the effects of tocotrienols on breast cancer prevention, the formulation of products low in saturated fats, crystallisation of palm oil, life cycle assessment of palm oil products as well as on palm phenolics. This Congress offered MPOB researchers the opportunity to present their research findings, as well as exchange ideas with experts involved in similar areas of research.

31st Palm Oil Familiarisation Programme (POFP)

The Palm Oil Familiarisation Programme (POFP) is a yearly event organised by MPOB with the cooperation from the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia. This year, POFP was held from 24 September – 2 October 2011 at Thistle Hotel, Johor Bahru. The event was officiated by Dato’ Hamzah Zainudin, Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, Malaysia. A total of 31 participants from 18 countries attended the 31st POFP.

The main objectives of POFP are to familiarise invited participants with the whole spectrum of the Malaysian palm oil industry including current research and development in all the major sectors of the industry, the latest applications of palm and palm kernel oils, downstream products and commercial aspects of the palm oil trade.

The programme provided a platform for participants to interact and share experiences, discuss current developments, explore new opportunities and establish international networking in the global oils and fats industry, particularly the palm oil industry.