

Bumper harvests in future

Ministry working with top durian growers to rehabilitate durian trees in the state to induce higher, better yields



Uggah (fourth left) alongside Sagah (fifth left), Dr Abdul Rahman (second left) and Ik Pahon (right) show some durians and products made using the fruit during a group photo session. Also with them are Chai (third left) and Chong (left). — Photo by Chimon Upon

KUCHING: Trees in several selected durian orchards across the state will be rehabilitated starting next month to induce them to bear more and higher quality fruits.

The durian rehabilitation programme under the Ministry of Modernisation of Agriculture, Native Land and Regional Development will be implemented through the Department of Agriculture Sarawak (DOA).

Its minister Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas revealed that based on DOA's observation, durian trees in the state have very poor yields with an average of only around 50 fruits per tree.

“The department will be identifying suitable durian farms at agriculture stations at Semongok here, Layar in Betong and Kabuloh in Miri to become demonstration plots,” he told reporters when met after officiating the delivery of the first shipment of durian paste from Sarawak to China at Top Fruits (Sarawak) Sdn Bhd here yesterday.

Uggah said that DOA will work with Top Fruits Sarawak — the company which signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the department last year — to develop the state’s durian industry and that the team had travelled to Kabuloh to determine the number of durian trees there.

“We have around 600 durian trees comprising 80 species in Kabuloh and these will become our germplasm later on for future development of durians.”



Musang King seedlings on display. – Photo by Chimon Upon

He added that there are an estimated 200 trees in each of the Layar and Semongok agriculture stations.

He explained that Top Fruits Sarawak will transfer and showcase their technology in durian farming to farmers at the agriculture stations.

“They have their own standard operating procedure (SOP) on how to enable the durian tree to bear fruit twice a year much like their durian trees in Johor.”

The agriculture stations will then serve as model farms to help durian farmers in the area to understand that regular fertilisation and maintenance are keys to earning a bigger income.

Apart from that, Uggah said he has also requested assistance from several elected representatives particularly those in Serian division to identify farmers which the ministry can adopt under the durian rehabilitation programme.

“The main group will be along Serian Area and one of my assistant ministers (Dr Abdul Rahman Ismail) is from Limbang, so we will identify farmers from there too as well as those from Long Lama, Marudi which has big potential.

“We have asked the elected representatives to recommend the farmers because we want to start this by April so that we can rehabilitate the durians to enable it to bear fruits by the end of the year.”

He is confident that the programme would be a success and the rehabilitated trees would double their yields by next year.

“From there, we will move on to encourage the planting of durians to farmers. At the moment, we are working out a strategy on how to provide sufficient and affordable durian seedlings to them.”

He said there are two setbacks pertaining to durian seedlings, one of which was that the price of a seedling can cost between RM150 to RM350.

“Another issue we face is whether the particular seedling is really that of the species such as Musang King.

“So we are now working out a mechanism to have some form of identification or scientific way of determining the particular species of the seedling.”

Earlier, Uggah officiated at the first shipment of frozen durian paste to Johor before it is exported to China.

Top Fruits Sarawak had purchased 80 tonnes of fresh local durian during the last durian season from December 2017 to January 2018 which was then processed into 16 tonnes of raw durian paste.