

4 more anchor companies sign to push state's food products

BY SAMUEL AUBREY ON SEPTEMBER 6, 2019, FRIDAY AT 12:11 AM



(Standing, from second left) Jamilah, Sagah, Uggah, Jabu and Dr Abdul Rahman witness the first MoU signing between the Sarawak government represented by Dr Chai (seated, second left) and Foodprint Farms represented by its chairman Chung Soon Lim.

KUCHING: The Sarawak government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Native Land and Regional Development yesterday signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with four more anchor companies to boost sales of Sarawak's food products to a wider market.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah, who witnessed the signing ceremony, said these companies have the technology, management expertise, capital and ready-access markets both at domestic and global events.

The anchor companies are Foodprint Farms Sdn Bhd for collaboration in cavendish banana, RFM Global Corporation Sdn Bhd (dehydrated fruit products including from Terong Asam), Kin Hin Company Sdn Bhd (gula apong-based products) and Ginger & Coconut Development Sdn Bhd (mud crab).

According to Uggah, an existing collaboration with Top Fruits Sdn Bhd, an internationally-recognised company with 30 years' experience, has been a success with Sarawak exporting 100 tonnes of durian paste earlier this year, adding the shipment could double or triple by the end of this year.

He also explained that these companies collaborate with local farmers through contract farming whereby the harvested products are bought by the companies while at the same time, the farmers receive guidance and training on new technology.

“There is a lot of demand for processed fruit products, but this industry is very much underdeveloped in Sarawak. So when this industry can be developed with the anchor companies, then our philosophy of buying whatever produced by the farmer would become reality.

“For example, rambutan. If you don’t preserve after one or two days, it would turn black and go to waste. You can see when you travel to rural areas during fruiting season, a lot of the fruits turn black and even the birds do not consume it. So now, we want to change that.

“If a farmer plants four or five durian trees, four or five rambutan trees, and other crops such as Terong Asam, then all of these will generate income for them (under this concept). They can accumulate substantial amount of income especially at the time when commodity prices are low, and this is also in line with our efforts to reduce poverty,” said Uggah at the signing ceremony yesterday.

Sarawak Agriculture Department acting director Dr Alvin Chai represented the government in signing the MoUs.

Uggah, who is also Agriculture, Native Land and Regional Development Minister, said the Sarawak government will also work out incentives for the anchor companies as these companies play a role in helping the state become a net exporter of food by 2030 and reduce its current food import bill of RM3.6 billion.

Meanwhile, yesterday’s event also saw the signing of three agreements related to a paddy project in Tanjung Purun, Lundu involving Area Farmers Organisation (PPK) Sri Gading, Ceria Agriculture Services Sdn Bhd, Antares Ventures Sdn Bhd and Tanjung Purun farmers.

“Tanjung Purun is new model for paddy planting, through collaboration with experienced companies which would introduce new varieties and application of new technology and mechanisation including Internet of Things (IoT) and use of drones.

“We give a target of harvesting eight tonnes per hectare a year. Now the most is two tonnes or otherwise 1.5 tonnes. With this effort, we hope we can increase our self-sufficiency level (SSL) for paddy from 41 per cent,” he said.

Uggah also said two more agreements were signed between the Sarawak government with PPK Siburan and PPK Kalaka for the handing-over of machinery following requests from PPK members there for mechanisation services to harvest their paddy at Skuduk Chupak and Lubok Nibong.

“I hope there will be no more politics within PPKs. Sometimes, those in PPK play politics instead of playing their role to uplift the socio-economy of their members.

“There are almost 170,000 PPK members in Sarawak from 28 PPKs. If PPKs can move forward with new ways, we in the Sarawak government will help by providing mechanisations and other services to the farmers,” he said.

Also present were assistant ministers Datuk Roland Sagah Wee Inn and Dr Abdul Rahman Ismail, Sarawak Science Research Advisor Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu and Tanjong Datu assemblywoman Datuk Amar Jamilah Anu.