

# Food Production Parks

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**KUCHING:** The Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry plans to establish six more Permanent Food Production Parks (TKPMs) in Sarawak.

Its minister, Dato Sri Ahmad Shabery Cheek, said the proposed sites include Pejiru in Bau, Sesang (Betong), Kubong (Limbang), and the Halal Hub (Tanjung Manis).

He was visiting TKPN Semenggok yesterday to officiate at a pilot project involving the use of Effective Microorganisms (EM) or probiotics on a large scale.

Speaking to reporters, Shabery admitted that 10 TKPMs was not enough for the state but developing each involved many aspects and costs, including preparing the land by trees, establishing roads, and providing water and electricity.

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Shabery, who is visiting all 75 TKPM sites in the country, said they were monitoring the

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Dato Sri Ahmad Shabery Cheek, Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Minister

best produce for each hectare and promoting good farming practices, such as use of correct fertiliser or pesticides and incorporating biotech methods to grow the best crop.

"Biotech can condition the soil without chemicals but with organic matter, including microorganisms, to help in soil fertility and to help combat diseases in plants. I was told that in TKPM Semenggok, the probiotics helped participants in getting better yield than usual."

Use of the probiotics in trials have produced positive results, such as increase of yield, improved product quality and soil conditions, reduced soil borne disease, and reduced impact on farm losses even during El-Nino and haze.

During his visit, Shabery handed over five-litre bottles of

SCD ProBio Balance Plus to each of the 10 participants of TKPM Semenggok.

Each TKPM is between 40 to 50 hectares wide and involves around 10 participants, who are allocated four to five hectares each to grow crops.

Shabery also highlighted how most of the participants were only in their 20s and were proud of what they do, thus dispelling common perceptions that farming was what old people do.

Selected participants are permitted to farm at a TKPM with a small maintenance fee. The government, who still owns the land, assists by providing basic facilities and amenities like roads, water and electricity.

"The concept is to use the land that is otherwise left unused," said Shabery.

There are 1,200 TKPM participants nationwide.



Shabery (left) spraying probiotics in the corn farm, guided by TKPM Semenggok leader Alan Wei.