

Sarawak to embark on programme ensuring increased production of fruit



Uggah having a look at the durian paste products that will be shipped to China.

KUCHING: Sarawak Agriculture Department will embark on a rehabilitation programme to ensure durian trees produce more high quality fruit.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas said the programme with local farmers statewide aimed to increase annual production of durian, which will be exported either in its frozen form or as food products.

For a start, the department will collaborate with farmers in Serian, Betong, Miri and Limbang for the durian trees rehabilitation and planting programme.

The department will also utilise agriculture stations in Semengok (Kuching), Layar (Betong), Kabuloh (Miri) and Tarat (Serian), which have some 1,500 durian trees.

“One of the issues faced by farmers is how to maximise productivity, produce good quality fruit and market the produce.

“We now have the technology for planting, processing as well as an established market for durian products.

“This is one of our strategies to strengthen the food industry and turn Sarawak into a high economy state by 2030,” Uggah said after launching the first shipment of durian paste from Sarawak to China here yesterday.



(Left) Uggah (centre) and his assistant minister Dr Abdul Rahman Ismail (left) checking out saplings of local durian species.

The shipment is a follow-up to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the department and Top Fruits (Sarawak) Sdn Bhd last year to develop the state’s durian industry.

Top Fruits Sarawak had purchased 80 tonnes of fresh local durian during the previous durian season from December to January.

This was then processed into 16 tonnes of raw durian paste.

The first shipment of durian paste will be exported to Guangzhou, China, said Uggah who is also the state Modernisation of Agriculture, Native Land and Regional Development Minister.

Top Fruits will transfer and showcase its technologies in durian farming at the demonstration plots at the four agriculture stations.

The company is currently collecting fresh durian supply from Kuching, Serian and Sibul but will gradually expand to other parts of Sarawak.

The company has set up a temporary processing plant at Batu Kitang but will relocate to a permanent facility at the Tarat Collecting, Processing and Packaging Centre.

“Top Fruits, with their technologies, could help the state double its durian production.

“They have established a supply chain and will process these durian into other food products for the global market.

“The potential in durian-based food industry is promising.

“In the Serian district alone, the Agriculture Department recently surveyed 18,000 durian trees.

“We are also looking at other potential areas such as Sungai Paoh in Sri Aman,” Uggah said.

He advised local farmers and entrepreneurs to venture into commercial farming of clonal durian, adding that varieties such as Musang King, Black Thorn and D24, are in high demand especially in countries like China.

Top Fruits director Chong Yie Loong said Malaysia’s total export value for frozen durian and frozen durian paste was RM130mil last year.

The exports were mainly to China, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Canada, United States and Australia.

This year, the company plans to produce 60 tonnes of raw durian paste, which requires at least 300 tonnes of fresh local durian.