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Dons win research awards

Agro-based products help increase padi yield

BANGI: Two Universiti Putra Malaysia researchers whose inventions have brought in more than RM20mil have won the Commercialisation Award at the university's excellence awards ceremony.

Assoc Prof Dr Syed Omar Syed Rastan and Assoc Prof Dr Ahmad Husni Mohd Hanif's agro-based products Vita-Grow and Zappa were devised specifically to increase padi yield.

With the use of the products, padi farmers' yields have increased from four tonnes to 10 tonnes per hectare. Vita-Grow and Zappa are also being sold in other Asean countries and the Middle East.

The scientists from the Agriculture Faculty received their awards from Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Khaled Nordin at a ceremony here on Wednesday night.

"We wanted to tackle the problem of weedy rice which affected padi growth as well as increase nutrients for padi growth," said Syed Omar.

In his speech, Khaled said Malaysia only commercialised 3.5% of its research findings compared to 10% overseas, adding that efforts to do so would be intensified.

"Malaysia currently spends 1.5% of its GDP on research and development activities.

"We have the Science Fund and Techno Funds with an allocation of RM1.2bil and RM1.5bil respectively and have doubled the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme from RM100mil to RM200mil," he said.

Khaled also congratulated UPM for receiving the highest allocation under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme among the public universities.

Other UPM researchers who were acknowledged for their contributions were Assoc Prof Dr Mohamed Othman and Prof Dr Maimunah Ismail for Excellence in Publications and Dr Cheah Yoke Kqueen and Dr Zulhamri Abdullah who were given the Young Researchers Award.



Well done: Ahmad Husni (left) and Syed Omar (centre) being congratulated by Khaled after winning the Commercialisation Award at UPM's excellence awards ceremony on Wednesday night.