Making inroads into new agriculture

For over 20 years, agriculture was largely neglected in favour of industrialisation. Under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, the government pledged to correct the imbalance and injected a whopping RM13.4 billion to turn farming into a serious business, focusing on building agro-entrepreneurs.

DEBRA CHONG checks out the extent of this revolution by zooming in on a dragonfruit farm in Menting, Johor.

In 2003, the government agencies finally paid attention and started providing him with material and financial aid.

I got 20 bags of fertilizer, each weighing 55kg, posticides and whitenessens, and 3,000 concrete poles (needed to prop up the creepers, which cost RM2,500. In 2006, they added three more people, so I tipped up some more for another two lots.

Bohd (Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority) got in touch to initiate a project to help the farmers. Poor smallholders increase their income. They wanted to invest in my dragonfruit project and gave me RM150,000 (RM3.6 million per person), and I put it another US$350,000, which is RM2,500. In 2006, they added three more people, so I tipped up some more for another two lots.

I am not well until the stage at the end of the year. Makino lost 2,400. Last year, he lost 1,200. Although the federal government approved RM4.7 million to be distrubuted immediately to affected farmers to enable them to revive their crops, the retired major claimed to have received only RM2,000 compensation.

It was more like sympathy money, estimated losses at RM30,000. It took me another RM20,000 to rehabilitate the land to be farm-worthy again, but I'm not sure how I'll cover that cost. I have delivered the fruit to the market and sold it to the public. We have to change our mentality. We should not spoil the reputation of the produce.

The government is moving in the right direction by focusing on agricultural entrepreneurship. To be a successful entrepreneur, you must start from the ground.
To be a successful entrepreneur, you must start from the ground. You must know how to cultivate, market and distribute your own products. You must have a target and not be easily satisfied with what you have.

Mahizon Mahbob
Agro-entrepreneur