

PARTNERSHIPS

UPM-MFM collaboration to enhance poultry expertise

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UNIVERSITI Putra Malaysia (UPM) is putting continued focus on strengthening its niche in agriculture by forming strategic collaborations with the industry that will help boost related research initiatives and community networking services.

The latest of its efforts is a tie-up with Malaysian Flour Mills Bhd (MFM) that will enhance its expertise in the poultry sector, which is in line with MFM's business goals particularly in broiler production.

Broiler chicken, which is chicken produced for meat, has a RM10 billion market in the country, of which 20 per cent is contributed by MFM.

UPM vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Aini Ideris said the relationship with MFM has been an ongoing one but a memorandum of understanding (MoU) marks a structured framework for both the university and MFM to work within moving forward.

"UPM is an institution that has a glorious legacy in the history of agriculture education in the nation. UPM's agriculture niche encompasses education and research, producing quality human capital and enriching knowledge.



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AINI IDERIS
UPM vice-chancellor

"At present, UPM ranks 53rd in the world for agriculture, seventh in Asia and first in Asean. Therefore, UPM's selection as a collaborative partner of MFM is timely, and UPM is always open to and welcome such cooperation," she added.

The partnership with MFM this time around kicked off with discussions between the two parties in November last year.

It later involved a visit by representatives of the two parties to University of Arkansas, a centre of excellence of poultry in the United States, that saw discussions on solving long-term poultry production problems in various economically important aspects such as management, nutrition, quality of raw material for feed, downstream processing of broiler products, welfare of broiler rearing and composting of chicken dung.

From there, MFM has agreed to donate an experimental closed house system for broiler chicken, which costs an estimated RM500,000, to the Department of Animal Science at UPM's Agriculture Faculty. The groundwork for the system is ongoing and the closed house will be



Teh Wee Chye

completed by year end.

"It will be like having a small industry on campus. If previously our students did internship on MFM's poultry farms — where accommodation is an issue — students will now get commercial experience on campus. Graduate students and researchers will be able to carry out research in a real industry environment."

Apart from facilitating research at the national level, MFM has helped UPM to link up with the University of Arkansas as an international collaborator.

"MFM will provide three full scholarships for three final-year students beginning next month to pursue sub-specialisation in poultry production at Arkansas University for one year."

MGM managing director Teh Wee Chye said it sees the potential of UPM as one of the top agriculture-based universities worldwide.

"That's why we are linking UPM with Arkansas University, the top broiler school in the US backed by Tyson, a key player in broiler production. The studies cover genetics production, nutrition, vaccination, food technology, veterinary science and more.



Aini Ideris (second from left) exchanging MoU documents with Arshad Ayub while Teh Wee Chye (right) and Abdul Shukor Juraimi (left) look on PIC BY ROSELA ISMAIL

"This collaboration with UPM is not confined to poultry; we import wheat and own flour mills across the region and we are also involved in aquaculture. As we grow, we need collaboration in terms of student recruitment and research. Students from Arkansas University can come to UPM and intern with MFM under this MoU," he said.

MFM is contributing RM5 million in shares as endowment to the university as part of the MoU.

"UPM can offer much expertise through the Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Food Science and Technology and Institute of Tropical Agriculture and Food Security, which have experts in broiler management, nutrition and composting of chicken dung which are highly relevant to MFM," added Aini.

Teh and Aini were the signatories of the MoU at the signing ceremony held at UPM's Faculty of Agriculture.

Also present were MFM chairman Tan Sri Arshad Ayub and dean of the Faculty of Agriculture Professor Dr Abdul Shukor Juraimi.