

Study Sabah's indigenous communities in quest to innovate food science, says CM

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KOTA KINABALU: Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Musa Haji Aman tells researchers to look at the indigenous communities in Sabah in their quest for innovation in the field of food science.

He said combining scientific methods of research and traditional knowledge would also help traditional know-how to continue to flourish.

"Indigenous communities, including here in Sabah, have developed

ways to preserve game meat using fruits. Large animals are preserved for consumption at a later date in our humid, tropical weather without refrigeration.

"The uniqueness of this preservation technique is the findings by indigenous people that fruit used in this process must be treated before being applied to meat," he said.

Another area of interest for researchers is the burgeoning seaweed industry off the northern and eastern

coasts of Sabah.

Investment in commercial seaweed cultivation in Sabah is valued at RM703 million to date, providing jobs to 13,000 people.

"This crop traditionally consumed by coastal communities has now been identified as an important component of the National Key Economic Area for Agriculture," he said.

Musa said this when delivering his speech at the opening ceremony of the International Conference on Food Science and Nutrition 2012 at the Pacific Sutera Hotel here on Monday night.

He said the state government has continued to work closely with experts from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and their partners in both upstream and downstream research to come up with sustainable solutions, the enhancement of produce value, and diversification on the usage of produce.

"Sabah has tremendous potential not just in people but also in the sustainable use of natural resources, including wild edible food items, most of which are still unknown to science. I would like to take this opportunity to invite conference participants to work with Universiti Malaysia Sabah on this journey of discovery," stated Musa.

The three-day conference attended by 311 participants from 20 countries including Australia, New Zealand, USA, the Middle East and Asean countries is jointly organised by the UMS School of Food Science and Nutrition, Malaysia Institute of Food Technology and the International Union of Food Science and Technology.

The Chief Minister also spoke on the pressing issue of global food security



Musa (centre) receiving a memento from Dr Kamaruzaman (left).



Musa (second left) striking the gong to mark the opening of the conference with UMS vice chancellor, Prof. Datuk Seri Panglima Dr Kamaruzaman Haji Ampon at left and International Union of Food Science and Technology president, Prof. Dr Geoffrey Campbell-Platt second from right.

saying that all countries should consider strategies that enhance science-based research and encourage the development of the food sector through new and innovative technologies

"Currently, we are already witnessing the negative impact and tragic consequences of food shortage due to severe floods or droughts in a number of countries. Global food security is a complex issue that requires urgent response from the international community," he said.

Recently, the World Bank reported that the global food price index has risen by 15 per cent between October 2010 and January 2011, which is 29 per cent above its level a year earlier, and only 3 per cent below its June 2008 peak.

Musa believes biotechnology could be another powerful tool in addressing food security and hunger saying that it

can be used to boost supply of safe, nutritious and affordable food.

He stressed that the application of biotechnologies such as genetic engineering and functional genomics must be encouraged to produce agro-biotechnology products that increase plant and livestock productivity as well as improve agronomics traits.

He also urged UMS and its partners to continue focusing on nutrition within the overall food production and food security debates especially among children.

"The government wants to ensure that every child and overall, every citizen, has access to nutritious and quality food in order for us to create a society that is healthy, knowledgeable and able to contribute to Malaysia's growth," said Musa. - By PAUL MU, paul@news-abahtimes.com.my