

Molecular biology helps transform farmers' status

TBP 30.11.2006 P. 9

KOTA KINABALU: The application of new technologies, particularly molecular biology can help transform the lives of the local farmers by raising their socio-economic status and creating wealth for the nation, said State Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry Datuk Abdul Rahim Ismail.

He said such technology offered tremendous opportunities for modernising agriculture through molecular biology.

"Molecular biology can impact crop or animal improvement by the transfer of genes. It can confer resistance to pests, diseases, herbicides and environmental stress, as well as enhance quality traits such as improved post-harvest storage, flavour, nutritional content and colour.

"These techniques produce new and improved agricultural products.

As an indication, the increase in the amount of land cultivating biotech crops indicates the huge commercial success of agrobiotechnology," he said when opening biotechnology symposium III 2006 at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), here yesterday.

Abdul Rahim said Sabah had implemented the Second Sabah State Agriculture Policy (DPNS2) which is a strategic plan by the state government to transform and develop the agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors by 2010.

He said the global area of biotech crops had increased from 1.7 million hectares in 1996 to 52 million hectares in 2001 and 385 million hectares in 2004.

"Modernisation of agriculture is generally achieved through improving efficiency and

productivity by utilising technology, creating and grooming agro-entrepreneurs, and encouraging research and development that can be commercially viable," he said.

Abdul Rahim said: "In this age of globalisation, Malaysia cannot be dependent upon traditional methods of practicing agriculture".

He said the government, including the Sabah state government, is supportive of any measures taken to increase the nation's and state's production of agriculture and agriculture-based products.

"Fundamental scientific discoveries and technical breakthroughs can profoundly affect economic growth and competitiveness. Such breakthroughs can cause far-reaching structural and socioeconomic changes. - Bernama