

UMK@Pondokpreneur Turns Pondok Communities Into Entrepreneurs

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Credit: Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)

KOTA BHARU, June 20 (Bernama) -- Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK), through its Institute for Poverty Research and Management (InsPeK), has developed a social entrepreneurship programme that is helping pondok communities generate sales exceeding RM2,000 a day during promotional and marketing activities.

InsPeK director Dr Ahmad Fahme Mohd Ali said the UMK@Pondokpreneur initiative is implemented under the Lembah Barakah Programme: Social Enterprise Hub for Downstream Product Processing and funded through the Higher Education Ministry's 2023 Translational Grant in collaboration with Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

He said the programme combines human capital development, technology transfer, social innovation and community income generation within a single entrepreneurial ecosystem.

"The role of InsPeK as a social architect in this programme reflects the university's continued commitment to making knowledge transfer and social innovation central to its contributions to society," he told Bernama recently.

Ahmad Fahme said the initial phase involved 30 participants from pondok communities, comprising 15 men and 15 women, under the guidance of a research team led by Associate Professor Dr Derweanna Bah Simpong and experts in community development, food technology and entrepreneurship.

Participants were trained in downstream product processing technologies to produce commercially viable products and create new economic opportunities for pondok communities in the state.

Meanwhile, Derweanna said the programme prioritises personal development before introducing technical skills.

She said most participants, comprising santri and pondok teachers, had no formal business experience and therefore underwent 15 intensive workshops focusing on confidence-building, communication, leadership, teamwork, problem-solving and entrepreneurial thinking.

The programme also introduced Commercial Hybrid Insoler Dryer technology, which combines solar energy with smart support systems to improve food processing efficiency.

"This technology enables drying processes to be carried out in a more controlled, efficient and consistent environment while meeting food safety and hygiene standards," she said.

Through the programme, participants developed three value-added products, such as Perasa Bilis, Ikan Bekok and dried fish, which utilises locally sourced ingredients.

Marketed under the Meheliah Ocean brand, the products underwent nutritional analysis and quality assessments to ensure food safety and meet consumer requirements.

"The project's success has been encouraging, with sales exceeding RM2,000 a day during several marketing programmes.

"This demonstrates that the products are highly competitive and have the potential to become a sustainable alternative source of income for the community," she said.

Derweanna said Meheliah Ocean would also serve as a community social enterprise hub to sustain economic activities beyond the university funding period through product manufacturing, skills training and market expansion.