



Sharil speaking to the media at UMS on Friday.

New tea product from mulberry leaves launched

DE 8.4.2017 3

Neil Chan

KOTA KINBALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) together with villagers from Kg Tudan launched a new tea product made from dried mulberry leaves.

UMS Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) Prof Dr Sharil Yusof said the Tudan Organic Mulberry Tea Leaves product was a project by the university with the local community of Kg Tudan in Tuaran.

"The main objective for this project is to help enhance the economy of Kg Tudan as the villagers there are generally farmers who mostly sold their produce in the tamus/local markets in Donggonggon town and Penampang as well as by the roadsides on the way to Tambunan.

"It has the potential to be a product for visitors to the State similar to Sabah Tea, for example, which is well known in the State and country so the next product which could be famous from Sabah could be Mulberry Tea.

"This is the result of the first project in Kg Tudan and UMS will continue to assist to ensure the success of the project. UMS and the villagers are still in the process of looking for an industrial partner to market this product."

Sharil added the project had acquired the KTP Grant (Knowledge Transfer Programme) from the Ministry of Higher Education which totalled up to RM167,690.

He said this to the media during a press conference on the launching of the UMS-Tudan Organic Mulberry Tea Leaves product at UMS, on Friday.

Sharil said on their first visit to Kg Tudan in 2015, they (UMS) discovered many mulberry trees being planted ran-

domly behind the houses and by the drains near the houses of the villagers.

"Based on our observation at that time, we felt that this plant could be a valuable resource that could be utilised to better the livelihood of the people.

"Hence, through this grant of knowledge transfer, we taught the interested villagers the correct way to plant and care for the mulberry tree. In addition, we introduced the agro-entrepreneurs concept to the villagers so that they learned about ways to create a variety of mulberry products.

"The villagers have been selling the fresh mulberry fruits on their own in markets before our project took place.

"However, since the fruits are soft, they rapidly became mushy and unappealing to be sold after three to four hours of being plucked. On realisation of that issue we introduced an innovation to the villagers, i.e. mulberry tea.

"Since the mulberry has its own fruiting season, we decided to use the leaves instead to create our product and currently there are two acres being planted with mulberry."

On the product availability in the State and estimated economic value of the mulberry tea project towards the villagers household income, Sharil said since the project is just being launched, it has yet to be marketed statewide hence the need for cooperation with an industrial partner.

"It is estimated to be able to increase the incomes of the villagers by 20-30 per cent. At the moment, it is considered a cottage industry but to make it more sustainable in future perhaps neighbouring villages can also be involved in this product."