

# UMS experts offer solution to Kundasang tomato pile

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*The participants and facilitators of the tomato processing, bottling and packaging demonstration at Kundasang Guesthouse.*

KOTA KINABALU: A team of multi-discipline experts from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) conducted a demonstration of processing, bottling and packaging of tomato products recently at Kundasang Guesthouse.

This technology intervention is a solution to the tomato pile as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The team comprising Faculty of Food Science and Nutrition food technologist Dr Mansoor Abdul Hamid, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities local knowledge expert Dr Jurry Foo and AgriSolutions nutritionist and coordinator Dr Yasmin Ooi conducted a technology intervention session at Kundasang Guesthouse.

According to Dr Yasmin, AgriSolutions is a multi-discipline team from UMS which offers farm to plate solutions for agriculture and food related issues.

“Hence, this programme aims to guide tomato farmers in Kundasang on how to process and store tomato produce as an effort to mitigate the tomato pile that could not reach buyers.

“This one-day demonstration is just the beginning, as more interventions will be conducted in the future to help farmers here,” she said.

Dr Yasmin also noted that appropriate safety procedures were observed throughout the programme, with the number of participants limited according to the available space so that physical social distancing can be observed.

“Not only attendance and body temperature of participants and facilitators were recorded, the Standard Operating Procedure for fieldwork by UMS for the new normal were also observed, and every participant completed an informed consent form,” she said.

Meanwhile, Dr Jurry said processing tomatoes into sauce and paste not only help overcome the problem of tomato pile, but at the same time, also gives added value to the tomatoes produced by farmers in Kundasang.

“Thanks to Japiril Suhaimin who invited us for this technology intervention and also coordinating this programme for the farmers,” he said.

Japiril, while representing a group of tomato farmers from Kundasang, also gave a token of appreciation to the UMS group for their effort to make this programme a success.

“Since the MCO was implemented, vegetable farmers in Kundasang faced problems in selling their agricultural produce.

“Thus, such help is very much appreciated,” he said.

The tomato sauce and paste processing demonstration was conducted by Dr Mansoor Abd Hamid with the help of two lab assistants from the Faculty of Food Science and Nutrition with experience in food processing, Fritzgerald Andrew and Dayang Janiah Abd Sami.

All quality control and product safety procedures were also demonstrated and practiced by participants. The participants also tried several recipes for tomato sauce. They then tested the finished products to identify the formulation that is most acceptable to local consumer taste preferences.