

# Full rice yield still unrealised

Don: M'sia yet to reach potential

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Malaysia is still far from realising its potential in rice production despite having the technology to make it happen, said a senior academician from UPM's agriculture faculty.

Prof Dr Mohd Khanif Yusop said the country's average yield was 3.7 tonnes per hectare, far short of the potential average yield of seven tonnes per hectare based on studies by several agencies.

"Yet we find news reports of farmers in Sekinchan producing yields of up to 13 tonnes per hectare.

"We can increase our yield by simply using existing technology, with good technical support for the farmers," he said when presenting a paper at a roundtable discussion on rising costs of living by the National Professors' Council.

Dr Mohd Khanif said the problem in the country was not the lack of technology but, rather, arming farmers with the knowledge and support network to modernise the way they do business.

Comparatively, China - which Dr Mohd Khanif said faced severe food shortage in the early 20th century - has since harnessed technology to push its average rice production to 6.4 tonnes per hectare, with the yield only expected to increase.

Dr Mohd Khanif said farmers also needed proper infrastructure such as irrigation canals and help in achieving full mechanisation to boost efficiency.

But equally, if not more important, is to shed the low image associated with the agriculture industry by recognising agriculture graduates as professionals through an Agriculture Professionals Act.