

Post-harvest tech drive

> Incentives, R&D grants for knowhow to boost agricultural production

KUALA LUMPUR: The government will generate more initiatives and provide relevant incentives for the development of post-harvest technologies to boost agricultural production, said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

He said special allocations and research and development (R&D) grants will be provided to support these initiatives.

"It is hoped with these initiatives and R&D grants, new technologies and knowledge will be developed to boost agriculture sector production, thus contributing to the food supply for the nation, and the world," he said when

launching the 7th International Post-harvest Symposium (IPS) 2012 yesterday.

The quadrennial symposium, titled "Post-harvest for Wealth and Health" and jointly organised by the Malaysian Agriculture Research and Development Institute, Universiti Putra Malaysia and the International Society for Horticulture Science, is hosted in Asia for the first time.

Muhyiddin said through better infrastructure, crop production management techniques and post-harvest technologies, Malaysia has set the target of raising production of agriculture commodities by 40% by 2020.

"Innovation is the key to making Malaysian agriculture sector more competitive. We must continue to seek new technologies that can effectively speed up this programme," he said.

He said with the advancement in post-

harvest handling technology, contribution of horticulture crops to total export has increased. "Malaysia has experienced the benefit of constantly upgrading and improving methods and mechanisms for post-harvest handling.

For example, in 2011, total exports of Malaysia's horticulture crops comprising fresh fruits, vegetables and ornamental plants were valued at US\$418.6 million (RM1.3 billion), a significant increase from the US\$246.6 million (RM764.5 million) recorded in 2006, he said.

Muhyiddin said the improvement in post-harvest handling technologies, especially on the extension of storage life, has allowed and will certainly promote greater volume of fresh fruits, vegetables and ornamentals to be exported to more distant countries, as well as, non-traditional markets. - Bernama