A mushrooming business puts a once sleepy hamlet back on the map, discovers Alan Teh Leam Seng

find his way blindfolded!

He tells me that the owner of the estate we’re heading to is among the few rubber smallholders in northern Kelantan who had recently participated in the Vokaraha mushroom cultivation programme conducted by the Mushroom Development and Production Centre (PPMM) in Padang Tamor. The centre is a joint venture between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Rural Development and is designed to assist farmers in improving their agro-forestry income by promoting mushroom cultivation.

As we reach the estate, I notice stacked rows of rubber trees and I notice the mushrooms growing on them. “You’ll be able to see them easily... they’re everywhere,” he assures me with a grin.

Walking further, I begin to see the rows of mushroom plants in bloom. To my utter astonishment, it’s right—there seem to be billions of them everywhere. The mushroom rows can easily be mistaken for a commercial scale mushroom plate and speak volumes about the commitment of the participants in both the mushroom cultivation programmes towards this venture.

Mushroom estate smallholders face a lot of tough challenges especially in recent years, shares Feri, before adding, “It’s good for them to diversify. The price of rubber has been in a steep decline and the rubber trees are not generating enough income for them.”

Grown consequently, he tells me that the commodities world has seen mushroom production grow by about 12% in the past 4 years. In Malaysia, more mushroom growers are opting to participate in a one-day course at PPMM. Within a short period of time, they are taught everything they need to know about the cultivation venture. Feri, mortifyingly, adds, “The mushroom row is rather easy and not as difficult as what you thought.”

Despite the growing interest in mushroom cultivation, there are still some challenges that need to be overcome. For instance, ensuring a steady supply of the mushroom spawn is a major challenge.

Thanks to the innovative research staff at PPMM, Vokaraha mushroom cultivation in Padang Tamor is the first in the world to use a modified soil culture media to produce high-quality mushrooms. Pre-processed solid-state mushroom cultures are just tossed away after the fruits have been removed for evaluation. Today, the local mushroom farmers are playing their part in this mission to recycle the waste and simultaneously generate income for them to support their starting mushroom cultivation.

As I walk around the farm, I notice that the mushrooms have been watered thoroughly. Feri tells me that the key to success is to keep the soil moist and fertile. He adds, “We have to ensure that the mushrooms are getting enough water to grow properly.”

After a testing session, I find myself in a quandary as to whether toAMES or not. It’s not an easy choice as everything appears to be perfect. After much contemplation, I decide to buy the mushrooms. The thirty-dollar pieces have a mild taste, slightly resembling that of potatoes. Fortunately, mushrooms are both nutritious and toothsome. I eat a piece of this mushroom and then I’m hooked. I order a box of these mushrooms for my next project. The mushroom farm is located on the outskirts of Padang Tamor near the Kuala Krai-Segamat Kuala Krai road. The farm is managed by the Vokaraha Mushroom Farming Association (VMFA) which is a joint venture between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Rural Development.

MUSHROOMING NO MORE

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In 1970, the Vokaraha mushroom farm was established by a group of farmers who were keen to diversify their agricultural income. Over the years, the farm has grown in size and is now one of the largest mushroom producers in Malaysia. The farm is located in the heart of the Vokaraha community and is surrounded by lush farmland.

As we walk through the farm, I notice the mushrooms growing in rows. The farm is well-organized, and the mushrooms are well-maintained. The farm’s compost is made from organic waste, and the mushrooms are grown in a controlled environment. The mushrooms are then harvested and sold to local markets and supermarkets.

The farm is also home to a mushroom nursery where new mushroom species are grown and tested. The nursery is managed by a team of experts who are dedicated to the development of new mushroom species. The mushrooms are tested for their nutritional value and taste before they are added to the farm’s production.

The farm’s success is due to the dedication of its staff, who work hard to ensure that the mushrooms are of the highest quality. The farm has also established a good reputation among local farmers, who view it as a role model for agricultural diversification.

The farm is open to visitors, and I take the opportunity to meet with the farm’s owner. The owner is a friendly and knowledgeable guide who is eager to share his knowledge about mushroom farming.

In conclusion, the Vokaraha mushroom farm is a great example of how one man can make a difference in the agricultural sector. The farm’s success is due to the dedication of its staff, who work hard to ensure that the mushrooms are of the highest quality. The farm has also established a good reputation among local farmers, who view it as a role model for agricultural diversification.

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