

Mida welcomes global players to diversify into value-added agriculture activities

GLOBAL players are welcome to diversify into value-added activities in the agriculture and food processing industries in Malaysia, the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida) said.

In a statement yesterday, Mida CEO Datuk Arham Abdul Rahman said by leveraging Malaysia's business ecosystem and established local supply chain, it serves as an ideal destination for companies to establish regional production hubs while also enabling the country to fortify its agricultural-based food production.

He said this following the completion of the Netherlands' leading vegetable breeding company Enza Zaden's first South-East Asia research and development (R&D) infrastructure facility, Enza Zaden Asia R&D Sdn Bhd, in Sauk, Perak.

"Enza's R&D centre contributes significantly to the national aspiration to implement smart agriculture through the utilisation of agri-technology and sustainable raw materials in line with the national framework for food security and the global initiatives for plant-based proteins to reduce carbon emissions.

"The growing opportunities in high-value food product manufacturing will facilitate the Malaysian talents in gaining knowledge on new processes and product development, apart from expanding the exports of Malaysian-made food products," Arham said.



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Mida said the milestone expands Enza's network in vegetable seeds research and agricultural development through its 45 subsidiaries and three joint-ventures in 25 countries.

The R&D facility is set to cater for the agriculture seed markets in 12 countries in the region and beyond, ultimately serving farmers worldwide to cultivate high-quality vegetables for the daily consumption of over 450 million people globally.

In 2016, Enza was awarded BioNexus status by the Malaysian Bioeconomy Development Corp Sdn Bhd (Bioeconomy Corp), an

economic development agency under the supervision of the Malaysia Agriculture and Food Industries Ministry that provides support and facilitation to drive the biotechnology and bio-based industries in the country.

Bioeconomy Corp CEO Mohd Khairul Fidzal Abdul Razak said the agency believes the company could develop innovative seed varieties that are suitable for tropical climate and soil conditions.

"We are confident that the research outcomes from this R&D centre will benefit and uplift local farmers besides contributing to national food security.

"We will continue to support the company and we look forward to their future success in adding value to the global seed industry," he said.

Meanwhile, Enza CEO Jaap Mazereeuw said the company's latest investment in Sauk is built with a conducive working environment along with state-of-the-art R&D seed processing and research facilities.

"As part of our initiatives to serve the South-East Asian farmers well, we recognised that research and breeding under local conditions are imperative in facilitating a sustainable agricultural system.

"After a thorough analysis, Enza board decided to invest in Malaysia by having an R&D farm of more than 20ha," he said.

Mazereeuw also said the company is committed to empowering many smallholder vegetable farmers across the region.

Enza RD Pankaj Malik said establishing a new office and having a dedicated team of R&D with local experience and knowledge will help identify the needs of the local growers and the local market.

"This enables us to develop the best high-performing varieties, totally attuned to the local (climate) conditions," he said.

According to Mida, Enza has invested over RM100 million in Malaysia and employed more than 100 locals in their workforce in the existing facility.

The company's technical training contributes to the capacity building of Malaysia's agricultural workforce, preparing them for future-ready skillsets.

As part of their commitment to promoting agricultural technical knowledge among the youth, Enza also provides internship opportunities for students through partnerships with local universities.

The Dutch company also has an education sponsorship programme for students to enable the country's agriculture industry to flourish. — *Bernama*