

TALIAN SAWIT

PORIM'S HOTLINE SERVICE: AN IMPORTANT TOOL IN THE TRANSFER OF OIL PALM TECHNOLOGY

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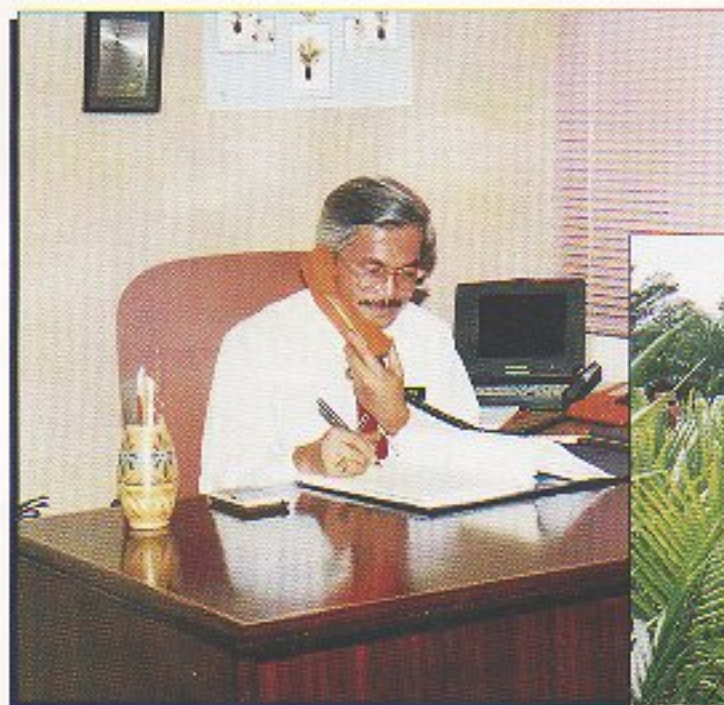
The Smallholders Development and Transfer of Technology Unit (SDTTU) of PORIM was formed on 1st October 1992 with the main objective of improving and strengthening the oil palm extension services. Various activities have been planned to develop the oil palm industry particularly the smallholders sector which comprises 55% (46% organized and 9% unorganized) of the oil palm planted area in Malaysia. Emphasis is given to this sector because of the relatively poorer oil palm performance compared to the more established estates sector. But the service is also available to others.

One of the activities is the hotline service which has been designed to enable the smallholders to seek direct assistance to overcome problems with their oil palms and it is also to provide easy access to the latest information on oil palm technology.

WHY GROWERS SHOULD UTILIZE THE HOTLINE SERVICE

There are several reasons why growers should use this hotline service:

- it is the easiest and quickest way to get immediate advice on their oil palm problems.
- they will feel at ease presenting their problems by this method of communication.
- it is very practical since they can call the hotline at their own time and convenience and be assured of a response.
- it is relatively more economical since the service does not incur travelling costs to meet the extension agent.
- it is time-saving.
- it is also very practical since telephones are available anywhere in the country. Further, from a random study carried out in four major oil palm growing states i.e. Selangor, Johore, Perak and Pahang, a satisfactory proportion of the oil palm smallholders have telephones in their homes.



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HOW THE HOTLINE SERVICE OPERATES

To get the service started, the main line was installed at PORIM's headquarters in June 1993 equipped with a direct line - 8251122 - and an answering machine. During office hours the line will be manned by an officer (from a pool of research officers working on rotation) whose function is to attend to enquiries, give relevant information and, in cases that cannot be solved over the phone arrange for visits to the holdings. This line will cover the nation.

Subsequently, the hotline service will be extended throughout the nation based on zones or districts through a network of contact points or agents at strategically located PORIM's research stations and offices of the Department of Agriculture. It is felt that while the main line is to receive and coordinate calls nationally, the existence of contact points or agents will allow a more effective communication and attendance to problems of the local growers. These contact agents are more familiar with the oil palm scenario within their jurisdiction or area of coverage. The growers may know the agents personally and they will be at ease when presenting their problems.

The entire hotline service network will be as follows:

1. PORIM Headquarters - main line covering the whole country and, specifically, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan.
2. PORIM Research Station Kluang and the Department of Agriculture Mersing, Kota Tinggi, Pontian, Batu Pahat, Muar and Segamat - for Johore
3. PORIM Research Station Teluk Intan and the Department of Agriculture Taiping - for Perak
4. Department of Agriculture Sg. Patani - for Kedah
5. Department of Agriculture Kuantan - for Pahang
6. Department of Agriculture Kuala Krai - for Central and Northern Kelantan
7. PORIM Research Station Hulu Paka and Department of Agriculture Besut - for Southern Kelantan and Trengganu
8. Department of Agriculture Sg. Udang - for Malacca
9. PORIM Research Station Lahad Datu - for Sabah
10. PORIM Research Station Sessang - for Sarawak

NOTE: All relevant officers identified to help the service particularly from the Department of Agriculture will be trained intensively on oil palm planting technology and effective handling of the hotline.

CONCLUSION

It is PORIM's hope that the oil palm growers in general, and the smallholders in particular, will make full use of this hotline service. It is envisaged that the service will help to handle the problems of growers more quickly and effectively. However, the ultimate objective is to upgrade the production capacity of growers especially the smallholders to a level that would be comparable to the estates. Hopefully, this can be realized in the very near future.

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