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DISEDIAKAN OLEH :

**CAWANGAN KOMUNIKASI KORPORAT,
LEMBAGA KEMAJUAN PERTANIAN MUDA**

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Weed wins – thanks to greed

When the authorities introduced a new, high-yield, weed-resistant padi strain in the market, they thought they had a winner on their hands. It could withstand herbicides and produce nine tonnes of rice a hectare compared to the usual five. But greedy farmers who tried to grow the crop throughout the year allowed the 'padi angin' (weedy rice) to mutate and become herbicide-resistant, too. The million-ringggit Clearfield padi plan is now a flop.

> See Page 4 for reports by **EDDIE CHUA** and **VINCENT TAN**

EXCLUSIVE



Weed weds rice: The 'padi angin' (right) has absorbed the qualities of the Clearfield rice padi (left) and become resistant to herbicides because farmers did not leave the land idle after every two planting cycles.



Slowing growth: Sekinchan Farmers' Association head Sam Fai showing the harm caused by 'padi angin'. Yields have fallen since the weeds developed resistance to herbicides.

Farmers go against the grain

Weed interbreeding sees Clearfield's future grow cloudy

By EDDIE CHUA
and VINCENT TAN
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PETALING JAYA: Padi farmers around the country are abandoning the supposedly "high yield" Clearfield padi strain.

The special strain, which took seven years' research and a grant of RM1.2mil to develop, is now a flop.

Instead of solving the problem, it amplified it, no thanks in part to greedy farmers.

Seeing its bountiful yield, they planted Clearfield more often than they were supposed to.

"The special padi plant has now cross-bred with the weedy rice or *padi angin*, which is considered a pest in commercial rice fields," said Mardi's Rice Research Centre director Dr Zainal Abidin Hassan.

"As such, the weed, also known as *red rice* throughout the many rice-growing regions, is now resistant to (the herbicide) *imidazolinone*.

"Farmers are unable to control the weedy rice from growing, making it more expensive to maintain the field," he said.

Clearfield or CL rice cultivar was jointly developed between the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Mardi) and chemical giant BASF.

The strain takes a shorter time to grow, consumes less water and promises high productivity.

Clearfield yielded eight to nine tonnes of padi per hectare compared with other Malaysian rice strains, which could only produce slightly above five tonnes per hectare.

Dr Zainal said Clearfield should only be grown in two cycles in a year, with an interval of one planting season.

But farmers cashed in on the strain's easier upkeep and planted beyond the recommended guidelines.

"Farmers took advantage of the high yield and grew it more times than what they were supposed to.

"As a result, the weed cross-bred with Clearfield.

"Clearfield transferred its herbicide-resistant trait to the weedy rice, making it a hybrid, resistance to the herbicide which is used at the beginning of the padi growing season to stem its growth," said Dr Zainal.

He said that over 80% of the weed was now resistant to *imidazolinone*, based on Mardi's two-year study at major rice-growing areas around the country.

He said Clearfield was supposed to have a lifespan of at least between 10 and 15 years before it outlived its usefulness.

"The effort and time spent to develop this hardy strain is now wasted," said Dr Zainal.

He said that finding a new hardy variation to replace Clearfield would be a long and expensive affair.

"Clearfield was developed on a pre-existing technology. Despite that, it took seven years to be perfected."

The same cross-breeding issue has also been demonstrated by a team of academics from Universiti Putra Malaysia, who carried out field tests and demonstrated how weedy rice could carry over the her-



Hybrid enemy: The Clearfield strain has cross-bred with the weed-like 'padi angin' variety, a pest in the rice fields, making it resistant to the herbicide used by farmers.

bicide-resistant trait in one year.

Dr Zainal said that despite the unclear future of Clearfield, they were hoping to find a solution.

"We are carrying out experiments to modify the current two Clearfield variations to make it harder and useful again. Only time will tell."

Dr Zainal said while Mardi devel-

oped the strain, they did not keep track of who grew the crop.

But in recent years, through their observations and field studies in several private rice fields in Pahang and several other rice-growing states, they found that the *padi angin* was resistant to herbicide and farmers were abandoning the strain.

Due to greed, farmers reap what they sow – literally

PETALING JAYA: Clearfield rice was based on technology first commercialised in the United States to combat the weed problem in rice fields.

Its success in overcoming this problem saw it widely adopted in South America and Italy.

Malaysia jumped on the bandwagon in 2003 and took seven years to perfect the pre-existing strain to suit the local environment.

Research to find the local solution was undertaken by Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Mardi) and chemical giant BASF Malaysia.

It was launched in 2010 with two variations – CL1 and CL2.

The two new strains can outlive the herbicide used to control and eliminate weedy rice at the beginning of the padi planting season.

However, there are specific requirements and recommendations when planting the variations.

To prevent cross-breeding, Clearfield cannot be planted for more than two cycles in a season.

However, padi farmers here did not follow the above recommendations.

Three years after it was first planted, there were already signs of abuse by padi farmers.

It took two years of extensive research to confirm the findings, but by the time the result showed that it had cross-bred with weedy rice, it was already too late to reverse the adverse effects.

It was also near impossible to start from scratch again as most fields in the country had already started using Clearfield and were affected by the cross-breeding.

Once a clear winner, popular padi strain now a loser

PETALING JAYA: Clearfield was a popular strain when it was introduced seven years ago.

Its efficacy and high yields – up to nine tonnes per hectare – made it a much sought-after variation.

But its popularity wavered when farmers noticed its resistance to herbicide.

Jitra-based Muhamad Rafirdaus Abu Bakar said that two years after

it was introduced, farmers found that herbicide used to eliminate weedy rice was no longer effective.

"We found the weedy rice had become 'kebal' (invulnerable) and the yield was starting to decrease," he said.

From nine tonnes per hectare, the yield dropped to six.

"The weedy rice competed with Clearfield for water and fertilisers

in the padi field. It then dominated the growing space."

Muhamad Rafirdaus, who owned a hectare of padi field and rented another 13ha due to the lucrative output, found himself caught in a bind after he was unable to earn enough profit to pay the land lease, fertiliser and weedkiller to sustain the bigger field.

"Never mind a decent wage.

When you average the profits across one season, it's only about RM600 to RM700 a month," he said.

And he said he was not alone. His friend operating under the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (Mada) in Kedah also faced a similar predicament.

Sekinchan Farm Operators Unit's chairman Sam Fai said Sabak Bernam and Sekinchan, traditional-

ly known as the more productive rice-growing areas in the country, were also not spared.

"The padi output from these two areas dropped from nine tonnes a hectare to five."

Farmers, he said, were unable to get back their operating cost.

Fai said many of them were contemplating switching to more profitable crops such as oil palm.

Saluran sempit punca banjir

Petani mohon besarkan atau bina terowong saliran baharu

ALOR SETAR - Petani di Mukim Telaga Mas memohon agar Lembaga Kemajuan Pertanian Muda (Mada) membina segera terowong saliran baharu bagi mengelak banjir berulang hingga menjejaskan tanaman padi mereka.

Petani, Yahya Md Isa, 66, dari Kampung Belukar berkata, kegagalan Mada membina terowong baharu untuk mengeluarkan air di situ menyebabkan banyak sawah ditenggelami air.

Menurutnya, terowong saliran keluar sedia ada sudah tidak mampu menampung jumlah air yang mengalir ke tali air berdekatan.

"Selepas Mada tutup sebuah terowong saliran beberapa tahun lalu, semua air dari kawasan sawah yang berkeluasan berpuluh hektar terpaksa keluar menerusi satu saliran saja. Sebab itu bila hujan lebat, petani di sini risau

rendah, jadi padi habis tenggelam," katanya ketika ditemui di Kampung Nongka, semalam.

Rugi berbelas ribu

Seorang petani, Megat Abd Rahman Megat Ahmad, 57, berkata, dia kecewa apabila keselamatan tanamannya rosak akibat ditenggelami air dan menanggung kerugian yang tinggi.

Menurutnya, dia baru sahaja mula membuat bendang di dalam kampung itu sebelum lalu dengan kaedah metanam semai.

"Menyang kecewa sebab semai saya pun habis hanyut dikawair. Padi yang ditanam pun tenggelam. Berbelas ribu dah saya rugi.



Soad bersama seorang lagi petani di Mukim Telaga Mas menunjukkan sawah yang dilanda banjir.



Soad menunjukkan terowong saliran yang masih digunakan untuk mengeluarkan air dari kawasan sawah.

kilau banjir akan berulang.

"Musim ni padi saya sempat kali ditenggelami banjir sampai terpaksa tanam semula. Jarak sawah kami dengan saliran yang ada sekarang sejauh 1 kilometer (km). Ini menyebabkan air mengalir keluar sangat lambat," katanya.

Yahya berkata, kawasan ini merupakan pengeluar utama padi, tetapi masalah itu menyebabkan pengeluaran padi di situ turut terjejas.

"Masalah ini sudah diadukan kepada Mada setiap kali mesyuarat, tetapi masih belum ada sebarang tindakan diambil sehingga sekarang."

katanya. Bagi Hasin Md Saad, 55, sudah tiba masa Mada membesarkan atau membina satu lagi terowong saliran air supaya clapat menampung kandungan air yang mengalir dari sawah.

Katanya, masalah itu sudah lama berlarutan me-

nyebabkan petani sentiasa menanggung kerugian terutama jika berlaku hujan lebat di kawasan itu.

"Masalah terowong tu bukan saja memberi kesan kepada hasil pertanian, tetapi juga penduduk kampung kerana sentiasa dihantui banjir apabila air dari sawah me-

limpah masuk ke kampung. Setiap kali hujan lebat sudah pasti ada beberapa keluarga terpaksa berpindah dari rumah mereka kerana bimbang air naik begitu cepat kerana terowong yang ada sekarang sudah tidak mampu menampung air keluar dari kawasan itu," katanya.

nak tunggu mesin padi mai, padi mak cik tenggelam," - Meriam

"Sabtu lalu, Ahli Parlimen Kubang Pasu, Datuk Seri Mohd Johari Baharum ada turun sini buat tinjauan keadaan bendang kami," katanya.

Tambahnya, dia menyapa kepada pihak terlibat agar dapat mengambil tindakan sepatutnya agar petani di situ dapat memasa hasil tiuk pejuh mereka seperti musim sebelumnya ini.

Seorang lagi petani, Yahya Hajar, 62, berkata, masalah berkenaan membelenggu mereka setiap musim ter-



Megat Abd Rahman bersama pekerjaannya menunjukkan semai padi yang baru ditanap semula akibat ditenggelami air.

utama pada musim hujan.

"Kadang-kadang banjir masa nak mula tanam padi, kadang jadi masa nak mengerat (menuai), kalau hujan saja, air dari Sintok, Changlun turun mai, habis-

lah kami," katanya.

Bagi ibu tunggal, Meriam Othman, 60, berkata, dia terpaksa menyewa bendangnya pada musim ini kerana tak mampu menanggung hutang yang semakin meningkat.

"Kalau dah setiap musim rugi, banyakk mana sangat duit nak dapat, hutang kena bayar, nak belanja rumah lagi.

"Mak cik pun dah tak ada kudrat dah, tak larat nak buat kerja berat-berat, pernah satu

musim tu padi osak dah nak boleh ambil (tuai), tapi sementara nak tunggu mesin padi mai, padi mak cik tenggelam," katanya, kecewa.

Kecurian punca aliran air tak lancar

Sementara itu, Jurutera Daerah Kubang Pesisir/Padang Terap, Ir Mohamad Ayub Isahak berkata, berlaku kecurian di pintu air Jeragan yang menyebabkan aliran air tidak lancar pada minggu lalu.

Menurutnya, berlaku kecurian lampu suluh di situ yang menyebabkan sistem litar terganggu dan pintu air tidak boleh dibuka menggunakan suis.

"Kejadian pula berlaku masa hujan lebat, jadi bila air terlalu banyak terkumpul di situ, tekanan air jadi kuat dan kekuatan seorang operator tak mampu nak buka pintu berkenaan.

"Jadi kita terpaksa tunggu bantuan daripada dua tiga orang operator yang lain, itu yang menyebabkan berlaku sedikit kelewatan," katanya.

Katanya, pihaknya juga kini dalam proses membaiki palih wayar yang dipotong oleh pencuri berkenaan untuk memastikan keadaan kembali seperti sediakala.



Afara sawah yang rosak akibat ditenggelami air batu-batu ini di Kampung Nongka.

Petani rugi padi tenggelam

Masalah berlaku di pintu air menyebabkan padi diusahakan 80 petani terjejas teruk

JITRA - Pengurusan pintu air yang tidak sistematik menyebabkan padi yang diusahakan kira-kira 80 petani di Kampung Nongka, Kampung Tengah dan Kampung Notoi Mukim Hosba, di sini tenggelam dan berdepan kerugian.

Ketua Unit Kampung Nongka/Kampung Tengah, Rus Ahmad berkata, keadaan berkenaan menyebabkan hampir 57 hektar sawah padi di kawasan itu terjejas teruk. Menurutnya, masalah itu sudah berlarutan selama tiga musim dan yang terakhir berlaku pada Selasa lalu.

"Air baru saja surut kelmarin (Ahad). Anak padi kami baru saja berusia sebulan, dah tenggelam.

"Apa yang kami nampak, masalah utama di sini adalah aliran air yang datang dari atas. Bila sampai sini, air tersangkut. Kawasan kami pula rendah, jadi padi habis tenggelam," katanya ketika ditemui di Kampung Nongka, semalam.

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Menurutnya, dia baru sahaja mula membuat bendang di dalam kampung itu sebulan lalu dengan kaedah menanam semai.

"Memang kecewa sebab semai saya pun habis hanyut dibawa air. Padi yang ditanam pun tenggelam. Berbelas ribu dah saya rugi.



Mak cik pun dah tak ada kudrat dah, tak larat nak buat kerja berat-berat, pernah satu musim tu padi dekat dah nak boleh ambil (tuai), tapi sementara nak tunggu mesin padi mai, padi mak cik tenggelam," - Meriam

"Sabtu lalu, Ahli Parlimen Kubang Pasu, Datuk Seri Mohd Johari Baharum ada turun sini buat tinjauan keadaan bendang kami," katanya. Tambahnya, dia merayu kepada pihak terlibat agar dapat mengambil tindakan sepatutnya agar petani di situ dapat merasa hasil tiuk peluh mereka seperti musim sebelum ini.

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Pesawah di Kampung Nongka ransang memilikikan nasib mereka pada musim ini.



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Katanya, pihaknya juga kini dalam proses membaik pulih wayar yang dipotong oleh pencuri berkenaan untuk memastikan keadaan kembali seperti sediakala.



Antara sawah yang rosak akibat ditenggelami air baru-baru ini di Kampung Nongka.

KERATAN AKHBAR : UTUSAN MALAYSIA
TARIKH : 16 JANUARI 2018
PERKARA : PERTANIAN



DOUGLAS UGGAH EMBAS (kiri) mendengar taklimat mengenai jenis-jenis nanas sambil disaksikan Samsolbari Jamali (dua dari kiri) selepas merasmikan Majlis Pelancaran Projek Perintis Nanas Premium Sarawak di Bau, baru-baru ini. - UTUSANMOHAMAD GUSTIE NOORAMBIA

Eksport nanas RM320j menjelang tahun 2020

Oleh **ANGELINA SINYANG**
ekonomi@utusan.com.my

BAU 15 Jan. - Malaysia dijangka mampu meningkatkan nilai eksport nanas mencecah RM320 juta menjelang 2020, berikutan permintaan pasaran yang luas ke China terutama nanas premium MD2.

Pengerusi Lembaga Perindustrian Nanas Malaysia (LPNM), Datuk Samsolbari Jamali berkata, pihaknya komited dalam usaha meningkatkan pengeluaran nanas secara komersial terutama untuk tujuan eksport, di samping melahirkan usahawan nanas berpendapatan tinggi selaras dengan Dasar Agromakanan Negara (DAN).

Beliau berkata, bagi mencapai matlamat itu, pendekatan Program Tanaman Kekal Pengeluaran Makanan akan diperluaskan ke seluruh negara sebagai usaha meningkatkan pengeluaran dan jaminan bekalan makanan khususnya nanas sentiasa mencukupi, konsisten dan berterusan.

"Pada masa itu (tahun 2020), pengeluaran nanas dijangka tumbuh pada kadar 22.1 peratus setahun dengan unjuran pengeluaran buah nanas sebanyak 700,000 tan metrik.

"Sasaran nilai eksport nanas pada tahun 2020 adalah RM320 juta sejajar dengan pembukaan pasaran yang luas di China terutama MD2, manakala nilai pengeluaran nanas negara dijangka mencecah RM1 bilion," katanya pada Majlis Pelancaran Projek Perintis Tanaman Nanas Premium Negeri Sarawak di Kampung Padang Pan di sini.

Majlis dirasmikan oleh Timbalan Ketua Menteri, Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas. Turut hadir Timba-

lan Menteri Pertanian dan Industri Asas Tani, Datuk Nogeh Gumbek.

Mengulas projek perintis tanaman nanas MD2 di Kampung Padang Pan, Samsolbari berkata, secara keseluruhannya, keluasan projek terbabit ialah 129 hektar tetapi hanya empat hektar dibangunkan dahulu sebagai Pusat Pembiakan Benih dengan peruntukan RM300,000.

Pada tahun ini, LPNM memperuntukkan RM2 juta di bawah Inisiatif Sumber Kekayaan Baharu bagi membangunkan empat lagi usahawan benih MD2 pada keluasan 16 hektar dengan anggaran 800,000 benih jenis ini disalurkan kepada pengusaha berkenaan.

"Secara keseluruhannya, sebanyak RM30 juta diperuntukkan kepada industri nanas pada 2018. Daripada jumlah itu, RM6.5 juta diperuntukkan kepada Sarawak termasuk RM2 juta sumber kekayaan baharu dan RM4.5 juta untuk Sabah.

"Bilangan pengusaha nanas yang menerima manfaat melalui program kerajaan ini ialah 665 orang dan LPNM meletak sasaran meningkatkan keluasan tanaman seluas 3,500 hektar yang mana 827 hektar adalah nanas MD2 menjelang 2020," katanya.

Beliau berkata, pada 2020, Sarawak akan menjadi hab pemasaran nanas MD2 khususnya ke China dan dijangka mampu membekal 100 kontena dengan anggaran nilai eksport RM6 juta sebulan.

Katanya, jumlah produktiviti penanaman nanas di Sarawak ialah 26 tan metrik per hektar dengan sasaran 45 tan metrik per hektar bagi tempoh sama.