

## Mardi to embark on red onion cultivation

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Mardi is actively preparing basic onion seeds on a large scale together with producer entrepreneurs who have been appointed for local onion cultivation. - NSTP file pic

PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Mardi) has developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for red onion cultivation that can be grown twice or thrice a year.

Its director-general, Datuk Dr Mohamad Zabawi Abdul Ghani said the development of the SOP is the result of innovation through the institute's Research and Development (R&D) department as guidelines for agricultural entrepreneurs to ensure the production of onions is viable and profit-generating.

"This SOP was developed as a guideline for efficient production to ensure the results generated are optimal and profitable. This SOP includes field and seed preparation, planting and harvesting," he said in a statement today (November 30).

Mohamad Zabawi said that based on the SOP, one hectare of land can see the planting of 250,000 plants capable of producing up to six tonnes of onions.

He said red onion plants only need a planting period of between 60 and 75 days per season.

Mohamad Zabawi said Mardi also produced onion seeds in a controlled environment to achieve the objective of producing pure seeds.

"Mardi is actively preparing basic onion seeds on a large scale together with producer entrepreneurs who have been appointed for local onion cultivation," he said.

As an initial step in the commercialisation of red onion production, he said, the expansion of basic onion seed crops will be implemented in stages from this year and next year in several selected locations throughout the country, with the estimated seed yield expected to reach 16,000 kilogrammes (kg) per year.

He said entrepreneurs who have been appointed will be guided through courses and training as well as supplied with onion seeds for free for the first season of production.

"Mardi hopes the commercialisation activities for onion production can be increased yearly starting from next year, by targeting the distribution of seeds for five hectares as well as the estimated yield of onion production of 30 tonnes per season," he added. — Bernama