

NEWS

More funds for palm oil-based vitamin E tests

SCIENTIFIC STUDY Malaysia to work with doctors from Singapore, the US and Australia to see how effective the vitamin is in preventing degenerative diseases

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The government has more than doubled funding to test the benefits of palm oil derived vitamin E on humans.

Starting next year, the government, via Malaysian Palm Oil Board, will work together with teams of doctors in Malaysia, Singapore, the US and Australia to find out the effectiveness of palm oil vitamin E in preventing degenerative diseases.

"The human trials are going to cost us RM20 million. Six principal investigators will determine the effects of tocotrienols on stroke, cancer, diabetes and children who suffer from attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD)," said Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok.

Over the last 30 years, scientific studies have shown that palm oil vitamin E, particularly tocotrienols, is a far more potent antioxidant than tocopherols.

Tocopherols are sourced from oilseeds such as soya oil, canola and sunflower, while tocotrienols are only available in high concentration in palm oil and rice bran oil.

Tocotrienols are able to help in body cell regeneration and more importantly, it can seek and kill cancerous cells. It is these unique biological activities in tocotrienols that show a promising future in finding cures

for stroke and cancer.

"Although we're the biggest tocotrienol producer and exporter in the world, we need to carry out more scientific studies to gain a deeper understanding of the health benefits of this super vitamin E," Dompok said.

A kilogramme of palm oil vitamin E sells for US\$500 (RM1,585). Every year, Malaysia exports some RM50 million worth of palm oil health supplements, mainly to Europe, the US, Canada and Japan.

"This shortlisting of six principal investigators for these clinical trials took considerable time as we needed to be thorough and stringent. We want these trials to produce health supplements that will be approved by the US Food and Drug Administration and the European Medicines Agency," the minister told reporters at a press conference here yesterday.

This funding boost for usage of tocotrienols in human trials is part of The Performance Management & Delivery Unit (Pemandu)'s drive to expedite value addition of the palm oil downstream activities.

The recipients of the RM20 million fund are Professor Bharat B. Aggarwal of Anderson Cancer Centre in the US, Professor Chandan Sen of Ohio State University in the US, Dr Fong Chee Wai of Davos Life Science, Professor Yip Cheng Har of Universiti Malaya Medical Centre, Professor Yuen Kah Hay of Universiti Sains Malaysia and Dr Tan May Loong of Penang Medical College.