

Mastering food science

> UCSI University trains the next gen of food scientists

RISING totals at supermarket checkouts are a classic example of how the food industry bites into our lives. A fundamental area so often overlooked, food supply—or the lack of it—is now in the spotlight, and this should continue in line with the deteriorating global food situation.

Given the erratic climate, countries are investing in new food products and technologies. Malaysia is one of them and the government has long stated its ambition of becoming a global food technology and halal hub.

To realise this, a large pool of skilled human capital must be created—and the onus is on universities to deliver.

Seeking to contribute, UCSI

University reached out to postgraduate learners with the launch of two new Master programmes, namely MSc Food Science and MSc Food Science with Business Management.

An interactive launch themed *Better Food, Sustainable Growth, a Healthier Nation* was held in conjunction with the launch of the programmes, and leading figures in the local food industry came together to share insights. Among them was Malaysian Institute of Food Technology president Dr Nik Ismail Nik Daud who elucidated the commercialisation process from laboratory to market.

Speaking from three decades of experience in academia, Dr Nik Ismail warned that researchers should not be under any illusions as commercialisation was no easy task.

“Essentially, food scientists need people in business, marketing, finance, engineering and quality analysis. Finding the right partners is not easy and forging a successful collaboration is another matter altogether.”

Picking up where he left off, Fonterra Brands Sdn Bhd head of new product development Megawati Suzari gave an industrial perspective of new product development, pointing out that academicians often fell short at the feasibility stage.

“Academicians really need to consider all the stakeholders who are involved in the commercialisation process,” she said. “A product may get good initial response from

marketeers and the business community but one must not forget regulatory bodies and the Health Ministry, whose objectives are to uphold public health at all costs.”

Both speakers agreed that interdisciplinary programmes were one way to groom the next generation of food scientists.

“Academicians need to focus on other areas apart from

research—their core expertise—and a food science programme with elements of business is ideal,” said Megawati.

The coursework-based pathway in food science is set to strike a chord with professionals who intend to pursue postgraduate qualifications without affecting their careers.

The university’s Open Days are on Dec 22 and 23.



(L-R) UCSi University deputy vice chancellor Emeritus Prof Dr Lim Koon Ong, Dr Nik Ismail, Megawati Suzari and UCSi vice chancellor Dr Robert Bong prepare a concoction of dragon fruit and jelly during the launch of the university's new Master programmes.