

COMMERCIALIZATION OF CILIBANGI

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INTRODUCTION

New genetically stable chilli varieties were successfully developed after more than 30 years of research. Breeding of the chilli in UKM that started in 1978 was initiated by Prof K.M. Graham and was further developed in 1987 to produce several progenies known as Cilibangi. The study was continued under four 5-year IRPA (Intensified Research in Priority Areas) programs led by Prof Dato' Dr Zakri A. Hamid. Two main researchers involved were Assoc. Prof. Dr Ahmed Mahir Mokhtar and Prof Dr Ismail Ahmad from Faculty of Science and Technology, UKM.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Studies such as screening and selection, genotype-environment interaction, local verification trials at Rhu Tapai (Terengganu), Lundang (Kelantan), Titi Gantung (Perak), Pulau Gadong (Melaka) and UKM's experimental plots (Selangor), genetic stability tests, heterosis test and fertilizer trials were conducted on these varieties. After 15 generations, varieties for Cilibangi-1 and Cilibangi-2 were produced and introduced on December 13, 1995 at Plant Biotechnology Laboratory officiated by Prof Dato' Dr Sham Sani, Vice Chancellor, UKM. Introduction of these Cilibangi varieties had instantly mooted the public interest, especially the small holders throughout Malaysia to plant these varieties. One young farmer had successfully planted Cilibangi-2 on a commercial scale for 20 acres of land at Sungai Buloh, Selangor, for three seasons.

Advanced to the introduction, varieties for Cilibangi-3 and Cilibangi-4 were developed after 20 generations and were launched at Plant Biotechnology Lab, Faculty of Life Sciences, UKM on March 5, 1998 by Prof. Dato' Dr Zakri Hamid, Acting Vice Chancellor UKM. Soon after, varieties for Cilibangi-5 and Cilibangi-6 were carefully enhanced and improved for 25 generations which then were officially launched at Smart Technology Centre UKM-MTDC on May 14 2001 by Dato' Seri Hj. Mohd Shariff Hj. Omar, Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Malaysia.

Besides their hotness and disease resistance (CMV, CVMV and anthracnose), the Cilibangi varieties have synchronized flowering and fruiting, suitable for planned large-scale planting. All the six varieties of Cilibangi can fruit all year long.

COMMERCIALIZATION

A startup company, Serotech Sdn Bhd has been setup in early March 2011 by UKM Holdings to spearhead the commercialization of Cilibangi. This SME (small medium enterprise) company is run by five main staffs: Chief Executive Officer, Marketing Officer, Chief Technology Officer, Nursery Manager (Horticulturist) and Executive Officer. It has introduced three EasyCilibangi planting programs and will supply selected healthy Cilibangi seedlings aged 3 – 4 weeks for the program. This program has the following packages:

1. Easy: for Home-growers/Landscaper/Home Fertigation up to 10 seedlings.
2. EasyGold : for Small Scale Farmers/Planters up to 1 acre or up to 6,000 seedlings
3. EasyPremium : for Large Scale Farmers/Planters over 6,000 seedlings

Both EasyGold and EasyPremium packages come with free 4-field consultations at site, ½ day training seminar on planting Cilibangi and one-month warranty for its seedlings (any seedling infected by disease will be replaced)

Besides this, Serotech Sdn Bhd also supplies old seedlings, flowering plant and fruiting plant for home growers, landscapers, home fertigation, small and large scale farmers.

SUCCESS STORIES

After a year since its inception under UKM Tech, Serotech has received a welcoming response from farmers and corporate individuals alike for its appealing potential in agriculture. Highlights worth noting are as follows:

1. Cilibangi was shortlisted for Innovation Business Opportunities (IBO), under the Department of Prime Minister, which was opened for business bidders and investors (The

Star, April 2012) that speaks volumes of the enormous attention Serotech has successfully achieved.

2. Serotech was invited to participate on a nationwide tour, AIM Innovating Tour 2012 hosted by AIM (Agensi Inovasi Malaysia, Prime Minister Department).
3. A nursery branch for Cilibangi was formed in Taiping (Perak) for business dealings covering the northern region of Malaysia.
4. Cilibangi powder was tested on its colour and taste and had a positive result that meets the requirement of making chilli powder.
5. Cilibangi has also been invited for showcase by the Ministry of Higher Learning as the best example of product developed from scientific fund.
6. Commercialized plantings of Cilibangi were successfully done in Bandar Seri Damansara, Tanjung Karang and Hulu Langat.

On-going planting programs include Jelebu (UNIK – Unit Inovasi Khas, Prime Minister Department), Nilai (Negeri Sembilan), Sabak Bernam (Selangor) and Jerlun (Kedah – Member of Parliament).

CONCLUSION

Cilibangi has the potential to be the popular research product that can revolutionise the conventional methods of planting chilli and can generate income for both farmers and corporate individuals. Both fresh and processed products of Cilibangi have been accepted by the public. We, at Serotech, are looking for interested, dedicated and optimistic investors, farmers, buyers and manufactures to spice up the global market with fresh, dried and processed Cilibangi.