

## **We need more young 'agropreneurs'**

THE success of young "agropreneurs" acts like a magnet, enticing more of Malaysia's youth to explore the world of agriculture that could bail them out of poverty.

The sector could help the country address the dire problems of youth unemployment and food security.

Young agropreneurs who have successfully applied modern, innovative and technological methods in the sector can serve as role models and motivate their peers to embark on the same path.

Emerging new technologies can drive innovation in improving product quality and increasing production volume to meet the needs of customers and market demand as well as generate maximum profit for young agropreneurs.

The sector needs to be transformed from being dominated by older, less technologically skilled farmers to having more modern young farmers.

Unfortunately, to date, the agricultural sector still lags behind other sectors, such as services and manufacturing.

According to the Statistics Department, the agriculture sector recorded only a modest growth rate of 3.7% in the third quarter of 2019.

In 2020, employment in the sector accounted for only 10.09% of total employment. In addition, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor reported a decline in the number of new enterprises or businesses in the sector.

The main challenge that needs to be addressed to achieve a higher number of successful young agropreneurs is to change young people's mindsets. They think working in the sector is difficult, dangerous, not glamorous and low-paying, and that it does not promise a bright future. These misconceptions need to be debunked.

Malaysia is currently far too reliant on imported agro-based products. It is time that the country's youth, especially tech-savvy graduates, get involved in the agricultural sector to increase the country's food security. They must be innovative and keep up with changing technology that will help them to break into international markets.

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