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Minister of Industry and Primary Resources Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Utama Dato Seri Setia Hj Yahya Begawan Mudim Dato Paduka Hj Bakar (R) receives the draft report of the on-the-job training on Investigation and Improvement of Acid Sulfate Soils in Rice Production for Brunei Darussalam, which was handed over by General Manager of Mitsubishi Corporation Osamu Ito. Picture: BT/Sally Piri

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THE Department of Agriculture and Agrifood of the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (MIPR) and Mitsubishi Corporation of Japan yesterday jointly organised a seminar on "Acid Sulfate Soils in Rice Production for Brunei Darussalam" to share knowledge and experience for sustaining rice production.

During the one-day seminar, Japanese experts Dr Hajime Narioka of Mie University and Dr Yasuhiro Nakanishi of Tokyo University of Agriculture presented materials on problem soils and procedures to neutralise acidity of soil, respectively.

The seminar aimed to show how the development of acid sulfate soils could be reduced by using land reclamation techniques for sustainable rice production in the country.

"Acid sulfate soils can create a variety of adverse impacts if not managed properly," said a statement provided during the event.

The statement said that the negative impacts of acid sulfate include killing vegetation, reduction in agricultural productivity through metal contamination of soils (predominantly by aluminium), acidifying and contaminating groundwater and water bodies (with arsenic, aluminium and other heavy metals).

Others are killing fish and other aquatic organisms and degrading and damaging of infrastructure through the corrosion of concrete and steel pipes, bridges and other sub-surface assets.

Some agricultural development areas in Brunei, especially those used for paddy production, are affected by acid sulfate.

"Through both training and seminar, it is hoped that future problems caused by acid sulfate soils can be minimised and will further enhance farmers' ability to manage their farm effectively sustaining crop yield

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and supporting food security and safety programme," the statement said.

The seminar was a follow-up programme after a recent training on investigation and improvement of acid sulfate soils in rice production for Brunei was carried out in the Agriculture Development Area Padi Planting Project Panchur Murai.

The on-the-job training was one of the activities under the memorandum of understanding between the government of Brunei and Mitsubishi Corporation of Japan signed on September 20, 2011.

The objectives of the training, which was attended by 13 officers and staff of the Department of Agriculture and Agrifood, are to enhance participants' knowledge on management of acid sulfate soils and the main problems encountered in rice cultivation, to serve as a platform to carry out awareness programmes for contractors and farmers to effectively manage acid sulfate soils for crop production.

Attending the ceremony and seminar session as guest of honour was Minister of Industry and Primary Resources Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Utama Dato Seri Setia Hj Yahya Begawan Mudim Dato Paduka Hj Bakar.

Pehin Dato Hj Yahya also presented certificates to the participants of the on-the-job training at the Agriculture Development Area Padi Planting Project Panchur Murai.

Also present were Japanese Ambassador to Brunei Noriki Hirose, senior government officials, lecturers, teachers and students from Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Wasan Vocational School and secondary schools. The seminar ended with a question and answer session. The Brunei Times

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