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Diploma students, lecturers
visit Asiatic Organic Farm

TAWAU: A group of Diploma in Agribusiness Management (DAM) students and lecturers from Institute of Science and Management (ISM) made a field trip to the Asiatic Organic Farm located at Kalabakan near here recently.

The group was also joined by three of ISM' Board of Directors, Mr Pang KF, Mr Adrian Tan KY and Mr Alfred Yee SM, and Mr Lawrence Kow, the chief executive officer (CEO) of ISM.

The aim of this trip was to expand the students' knowledge about organic farming, and to expose them to the potentials in the agriculture sector.

The journey to the site took about and upon arrival the group was greeted by the lush greenery of the 1,310 hectares virgin farm land and the chief operation officer (COO) of the Asiatic Organic Farm, Nip Wing Kan and his staff.

The group was first brought to visit a long house resort, overlooking the virgin forest area. According to Mr Nip, apart from planting organic vegetables, they are also focusing on health and eco-tourism, which can offer visitors a great encounter with nature and experience for themselves the freshly hand-picked organic produce.

The group was then given a briefing session and a chance to ask questions about organic farming, planting methods and benefits of being organic, as the farm's aim is to achieve an agro-ecosystem that is ecologically, socially and economically sustainable.

According to the farm general manager, Shum Ah Lek, who was once a conventional-turned-organic farmer, there



The visitors and their hosts at the Asiatic Organic Farm in Kalabakan.

are two main principles of organic farming.

“First, we need to take care and nourish the soil’, Shum said, adding that if the soil is healthy it will help to balance the nutrients, and boost the health of the vegetables. Soil is a fragile resource and its nutrient can easily be depleted. In due time, the soil will be ‘dead’ and barren to be able to support any life.

“Secondly, there are no bad pests or insects in organic farming, only good insects. Once the vegetables grow strong and healthy, its own ‘immunity’ will naturally deter the pest away,” Shum explained.

Another interesting point mentioned was that, insects only infest plants that are nutritionally imbalanced. This often occurs in conventional farming where the crop are being ‘force fed’ with chemical fertilizers. Hence, it will produce vegetables with imbalance nutrients that attracts insects. As a result, most conventional farmers will eventually resort to chemical pesticides as a method of controlling the insects or pests, Shum said.

The group was then brought to visit the vegetable farm and the fruit farm by Joannes Entamang and Jonity Philip. There, the students were briefed even more on the technical aspects of organic vegetable farming.

One of the students, Wong Dick Wen, said that he learnt a lot about organic farming and that it has inspired

him to one day to be involved in organic farming as well.

Another DAM student, Salina Hiew, said, the trip was certainly an eye-opener for young people and it changes their perspectives about agriculture, as they are able to see how this industry can be profitable and beneficial to the community. The trip has certainly achieved its objectives and it is hoped that it has inspired the students to be successful in their studies in ISM.

September Intake 2017 for diploma programmes is still open for registration and those interested can contact ISM at 089-779623. For more information about Asiatic Organic Farm, visit their FB page 'Asiatic Organic Farm' or contact 016-826 3300 (Mrs Pang).