

Brief History

The oil palm tree was introduced to Sarawak as an ornamental plant in the 1930s. However, it was not until 1966 that the Department of Agriculture Sarawak started a pilot project on the commercial planting of the crop, albeit on a small scale, in the Limbang Division. The first significant milestone in the development of oil palm plantations in Sarawak was the establishment in late 1969 of some 200 ha of oil palm at the Bukit Peninjau area in Miri by the now defunct Sarawak Development Finance Corporation (SDFC).

In 1968 the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) and the State government entered into a joint venture to form the Sarawak Oil Palm Berhad for pioneering a large scale commercial planting of oil palm in Lambir, Miri. An area of 5,000 ha of state land near Bukit Lambir was converted into an oil palm plantation. This was later followed by State government agencies viz: Sarawak Land Development Board (1971), Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (1976) and the Land Custody and Development Authority (1980). Two federal agencies - Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority and the Federal Land Development Authority also embarked on oil palm cultivation in the state.

Subsequently in the 1980s, at the invitation of the State government, private sector companies from Peninsular Malaysia also ventured into oil palm plantation development on state land. These companies include well-established oil palm plantation companies such as Austral Enterprise Berhad, Perlis Plantation Berhad, Golden Hope Plantation Berhad, Boustead Estate's Agency Berhad, Asiatic Development Berhad and Tradewinds (M) Berhad.

Local logging companies had also diversified into oil palm cultivation with some planting oil palm on their logged over areas.

Availability of Suitable Land.

Sarawak has a vast land area of about 12.4 million ha of which at least 3.9 million ha are suitable for oil palm cultivation. Native Customary Rights (NCR) land is estimated to constitute about 1.5 million ha of the area considered as suitable for oil palm. Given this available resource and positive impacts land development will have on the rural areas as well as the State economy, the Sarawak

Government has targeted for 1.0 million ha of land to be fully developed into oil palm plantations by the year 2010.

Progress as at 30 June 2007

By the end of June 2007, a total of 628,095 ha of land had been planted with oil palm throughout the state. This represents 62.8 percent of the 1.0 million ha targeted for 2010.