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GREEN: Going green with goats

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Best Goats And Sheep Farm is not only organic but there is a distinct lack of odour too, writes Zuhaila Sedek-De Booij

AT Best Goats And Sheep Farm in Kampung Sungai Dua, Bentong, Pahang, the bleating from its residents is incessant and its the only audible sound around.

“Mbekk... mbekk!” The male goats look like characters from Narnia and are louder than the females.

Beyond the din, the farm stands out for a very special reason. The organic farm run by Intan Zarinah Jailani has been operational for six years now and has proven that green farming has its benefits.

CHEMICAL-FREE

Goat farms are usually smelly but this one is different. There’s no stinking aroma, thanks to the effective microbes that Intan uses in her probiotics mixture spray, which helps reduce odour.

“People are surprised that our farm has no bad smell,” says Intan, 50.

The probiotics mixture is made with dregs, water and brown sugar. After these are mixed, the concoction is kept for three months before it is sprayed around the pens. It gets rids of flies too.

“Because the effective microbes in the probiotics are made of natural ingredients, the mixture that goes into the soil will help improve the roots of trees and allow better distribution of oxygen. Organisms like worms can dig deeper into the soil too. All these are good for the environment,” she explains.

She does not use chemicals on the animals and crops at her farm. Chemical use in farming emits more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, increasing the greenhouse effect.

“People have been using effective microbes for ages. For example, our forefathers used to water plants with water from washing rice water to enhance growth,” she adds.

HEALTHY ANIMALS

Farm animals are less prone to sickness with the use of probiotics. And when they do get sick (like flu or bloating) home remedies are used.

Intan keeps 132 goats (from the Boer breed) and sheep. To tell the goats from the sheep, look at their tails. A goat's tail is upright while a sheep's tail points downwards.

While she is busy feeding the goats with food pellets, I take a look around. There are a few big and small pens. The big ones hold one billy goat and about 10 nanny goats for breeding, the focus of the farm.

Whenever I approach the goats, they run to the opposite corner, with their rears facing me. But the animals look healthy and happy. Intan says the probiotics and organic feed are a catalyst in this aspect.

Other than pellets, the animals are fed pesticide-free grass and banana leaves. Intan and her employees plant the grass at the farm.

The animal droppings are collected twice a week and made into organic manure. These goat droppings are mixed with saw dust ash, hydrated lime and effective microbes for fertilising banana and pineapple trees on the 50-hectare farm.

RECYCLED WATER AND SOLAR ENERGY

There was no water or electricity supply at the farm when Intan first acquired the land. She and her husband harvested rainwater. There are about 15 tanks containing 2,270 litres of water each.

“We never have water shortage here,” says Intan while her 9-year-old son looks on.

For electricity, she has installed eight solar panels of 1.2m by 2.4m bought with the help of the Veterinary Department.

“Although these are pricey to install, they save money in the long run,” she says.

A few metres from the farm, Intan seeks shelter at a pondok (hut) after a long day at work. The electricity and water supply here also come from the harvested rainwater and solar energy. Water used at the shelter is filtered and channelled back to the farm.

PART OF LIFE

Intan and her husband had always dreamt of having their own farm and when they had the chance to make the dream a reality, they knew they wanted to go green.

Being environmentally-friendly is second nature to Intan and her family. “We have been using our own shopping bag years before the malls made it compulsory. Whenever we take away food, we use our own containers too. At home, I

have different trash bins for recycling purposes,” says Intan. “We don't do all this just for commercial reasons. We wanted an organic farm because of our love for Mother Nature,” says the mother of six.

She hopes to install more eco-friendly features at the farm. To her, being nature-friendly is not difficult. All that is needed is the desire. Intan and her family have been working independently to keep the farm organic.

She and the other farmers at Kampung Sungai Dua share their knowledge with each other. By doing so, the move towards more organic farming can be promoted.

Away from the farm, the soft-spoken Intan owns a design company in Subang. She commutes from her home in Subang to Bentong every weekend and even on weekdays. During school holidays, her two young boys follow her to the farm.

Sitting with Intan at her pondok, I am amazed by the hilly view from my seat. Everything looks so serene and peaceful.

