

Country's First RM20 Million Cultivated Meat Production Facility In Penang Opens Q4 2024

By Cynthia Ignatius - March 16, 2023



Bio-based Accelerator (BBA) company, Cell AgriTech, will set up its first main cultivated meat production facility in Penang by the end of the fourth quarter in 2024, with a total investment of RM20 million. This pioneering facility for cultivated meat production will be the first of its kind to be established in Malaysia. The company expects to launch its first cultivated meat product in May 2025.

The announcement was made during the 1st Malaysia Cultivated Meat Conference at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre on 15 and 16 March 2023, jointly organised by Cell Agritech and Malaysian Bioeconomy Development Corporation (Bioeconomy Corporation). The cultivated meat event is the first of its kind to be held in Malaysia and was officiated by Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), YB Datuk Arthur Joseph Kurup on 16 March.

Cultivated meat is meat produced from biotechnology that involves growing animal tissue cells in a controlled laboratory setting, instead of relying on conventional animal farming methods of raising and slaughtering animals. The result is an exact replica of real meat that potentially offers similar taste, texture, and nutritional value as conventionally farmed meat.

Datuk Arthur Joseph Kurup stated that cultivated meat is one of the emerging solutions for sustainable source of meat that promises to revolutionise the food industry in Malaysia by reducing environmental impact and improving animal welfare, while also potentially providing a healthier and safer alternative to conventionally produced meat.

“The development of cultivated meat technology in Malaysia promises to create job opportunities and revenue while addressing national challenges such as food security, health management, and climate change,” said Datuk Arthur Joseph Kurup. He added that MOSTI, through Bioeconomy Corporation, will support efforts like cultivated meat to strengthen the nation’s food security.

Cultivated meat is a vital part of Malaysia's National Biotechnology Policy 2.0, specifically under Flagship Project 2, which aims to develop a food ecosystem for future high-value products using advanced technologies such as cellular agriculture for artificial meat, marine, and aquaculture products.

Bioeconomy Corporation's CEO, Mohd Khairul Fidzal Abdul Razak said, "As the global population surpassed 8 billion in November 2022 and with limited resources to produce enough food for everyone sustainably, the cultivated meat industry is poised to grow substantially. According to a recent study by the Good Food Institute, the alternative protein industry has attracted RM63.7 billion (USD 14.2 billion) in global investments during the last ten years and that these investments have doubled year over year.

Recognising the massive potential of this industry, Bioeconomy Corporation will continue to collaborate with companies such as Cell AgriTech, MOSTI, other ministries, and regulatory bodies to develop policies, regulations, and frameworks that will benefit the entire future food industry."

Founder and Manufacturing Vice President, Cell AgriTech Group of Companies, Jason Ng stated, "We are proud to be the first cultivated meat company in the country, bringing a sustainable and delicious alternative to traditional meat products. We believe that the future of meat is cultivated. We are committed to bringing this innovative and sustainable solution to the meat industry as our focus in the field of cellular agriculture."

Commenting on the signing ceremony during the conference, Ng said, “Cell AgriTech is teaming up with UmamiMeats, a company that produces cultured seafood based in Singapore, to scale up cultivated seafood production in Singapore and Malaysia. We have made significant strides in developing cell lines for Grouper, Japanese Eel, and Snapper, and are now ready to scale up our production efforts.”

Ng also noted that Cell AgriTech has partnered with Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) to introduce a professional certification programme in cultivated meat, covering fundamental concepts to industrial applications. With the syllabus now finalised, interested individuals can apply for the course starting May 2023.