

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Malaysia

**Post:** Kuala Lumpur

### Borlaug Fellowship in Malaysia

**Report Categories:**

Agriculture in the News

**Approved By:**

Joani Dong, Regional Agricultural Attaché

**Prepared By:**

Joani Dong, Regional Agricultural Attaché

**Report Highlights:**

Read how the USDA Borlaug Fellowship Program supported research to fight devastating disease and insects in the production of Malaysian cocoa. This world renowned program supports collaborative research that impacts food security, agricultural productivity, and economic growth.

## **Borlaug Fellowship in Malaysia Research that Benefits the Cocoa Industry**

On March 21, 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) office at the American Embassy in Kuala Lumpur hosted Sarah Librea, Senior Program Manager for Asia and Latin America from the FAS headquarters in Washington, D.C. The group traveled to the Malaysian Cocoa Board (MCB) research facility in the Malaysian State of Perak to meet with two researchers who had participated in the 2015 Borlaug Fellowship Program. One had evaluated plant extracts from herbs of the ginger family to control cocoa pod borer whose larvae tunnel their way into pods to feed on tissue. The other had investigated the role of micronutrients to fight vascular-streak dieback (VSD), a fungal cocoa disease that can kill vulnerable young seedlings as well as mature trees. In their current work at MCB labs, the two continue to build upon research initiated under the Borlaug program.



**T. Y. Kheng (alumni), A. G. Wahab (FAS), J. Dong (FAS), H. Ramba (MCB), S. Librea (FAS), S. Bakar (alumni) (left). Disease infected vs. healthy cocoa pod (right)**  
*(Source: U.S. Embassy/USDA-FAS Kuala Lumpur)*

Malaysia was previously among the top 10 producers of cocoa. However, with the higher cost of production, currently at 6,000 RM (US\$909)/dry ton, up from less than 2,000 RM (\$455)/dry ton, cocoa fields have been destroyed and replaced by more profitable oil palm trees. Malaysia is number four worldwide in hybrids/accessions and has the largest germplasm bank in Asia

Including four Class 1 cocoa varieties capable of producing high yields and large pods. Malaysia imports 90% of its cocoa beans from Indonesia. There are six grinders in Malaysia that process beans into semi-finished products such as cocoa mass, butter, cakes and powder used as ingredients in the manufacture of food, beverages and chocolates. Cocoa butter is used for non-food products such as cosmetics, cocoa oil, soap, cocoa-based creams, skin lotions, lip glosses, chap sticks and ointments.



A popular Class 1 clone variety in Malaysia called MCB C1 (I) and

fermented beans (r)



Dried beans (I) and

**H.Ramba (MCB) and S. Librea (FAS – Sr.Program Manager for Borlaug) next to beans ready for sale to grinders (r)**

*(Source: U.S. Embassy/USDA-FAS Kuala Lumpur)*

Each fellowship costs U.S. taxpayers about \$40,000 with Borlaug Fellows spending 12 weeks in the United States and working individually with U.S. scientists/mentors in their fields. They acquire new research techniques, gain exposure to the latest scientific developments in various fields of agriculture, access fully-equipped laboratories and libraries, and learn about unique public-private partnerships that help fund agricultural research and science. Mentors coordinate the Fellows’ training, and visit their countries upon completion to continue collaboration.

The Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA’s foreign affairs agency which links U.S. agriculture to the world to enhance export opportunities and global food security, sponsors the Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellowship Program (BFP) that supports researchers, scientists and policy makers to research areas that impact food security, agricultural productivity, and economic growth. Host institutions include U.S. land-grant universities, USDA or other U.S. government agencies, research facilities, not-for-profit institutions, and international agricultural research centers. The application cycle for the 2018 Borlaug Fellowship Program opens in October. Refer to the following for an application and details: <https://www.fas.usda.gov/programs/borlaug-fellowship-program>