Foreword

Welcome to the third issue of 2023 for the Pertanika Journal of Tropical Agricultural Science (PJTAS)!

PJTAS is an open-access journal for studies in Tropical Agicultural Science published by Universiti Putra Malaysia Press. It is independently owned and managed by the university for the benefit of the world-wide science community.

This issue contains 18 articles; three review articles and the rest are regular articles. The authors of these articles come from different countries namely Belgium, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand and USA.

Tuan Zainazor Tuan Chilek and his team from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu isolated and identified the pathogenic bacteria in *kelulut* honey. Forty-eight samples of *kelulu*t honey (open and closed pot) and propolis were obtained from selected farms in Terengganu by focusing on *Heterotrigona itama*. Besides that, the swabbing technique was done on the wooden beehive of the *kelulut* to evaluate the environmental contamination. This study indicates that contamination of *kelulut* honey with *Bacillus cereus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Pantoea* spp., *Serratia plymuthica*, and *Staphylococcus aureus*, which may exist in the *kelulut* honey through food handlers, utensils, and the environment. The detailed information of this article is available on page 861.

A selected article entitled “Growth and Yield Comparison of Rice Plants Treated with Encapsulated *Trichoderma asperellum* (UPM 40) in Response to Drought Stress” evaluated the effects of encapsulated *Trichoderma asperellum* (UPM 40) on the growth and yield of rice plants planted in saturated and flooded soil conditions in response to drought stress. The drought stress was imposed by halting watering during early anthesis for 14 days and resumed afterward. They found out that applying 5 g encapsulated *T. asperellum* (UPM 40) to the rice plants would perform best in flooded soil conditions during drought stress. On the contrary, rice plants planted in saturated soil conditions without inoculation of the fungus did not perform as well. Full information of this study is presented on page 875.

A regular article entitled “Effect of Straw Compost (*Oryza sativa* L.) on Crop Production” analyzed the effectiveness of rice straw compost for intensified-rice cultivation by composting the rice straw from the previous planting season on the field (*in situ*) using the “Effective Microorganisms version 4” (EM-4), which contains *Lactobacillus* sp., *Rhodopseudomonas* sp., *Actinomycetes* sp., *Streptomyces* sp., yeast, and cellulose-decomposing fungus. The results show that the application of straw compost provides a

significant increase in dry grain weight, panicle length, and the number of grains per rice plant, as well as the C-organic, total N, and K levels in the soil. However, the treatment did not give significant results on the clumps number and rice grain weight. The further details of this study are found on page 1047.

We anticipate that you will find the evidence presented in this issue to be intriguing, thought-provoking and useful in reaching new milestones in your own research. Please recommend the journal to your colleagues and students to make this endeavour meaningful.

All the papers published in this edition underwent Pertanika's stringent peer-review process involving a minimum of two reviewers comprising internal as well as external referees. This was to ensure that the quality of the papers justified the high ranking of the journal, which is renowned as a heavily-cited journal not only by authors and researchers in Malaysia but by those in other countries around the world as well.

We would also like to express our gratitude to all the contributors, namely the authors, reviewers, Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Board Members of PJTAS, who have made this issue possible.

PJTAS is currently accepting manuscripts for upcoming issues based on original qualitative or quantitative research that opens new areas of inquiry and investigation.

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