

Headline	FRIM urged to set up Acacia Mangium division		
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Madius (seated) signing the Drying Manual and SOP as well as the Drying Mill Quality Control Manual to mark the launch of the workshop. Seen with him are Kenong Selangor FRIM deputy director general Dr Rahim Sudin (left), project coordinator Fong Ming San (second left), STIA treasurer general Tan Peng Juan (second right), STIA secretary general Stephen Chaw Zie Shing (right).

## FRIM urged to set up Acacia Mangium division

By Shalina R

**KOTA KINABALU:** Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Madius Tangau urged Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) to create a division especially for the Acacia Mangium development.

Speaking when launching the Technology Transfer Workshop Value-adding Sabah Acacia Lumber Workshop here yesterday, Madius said the division would revolve completely around the lumber species right from the nursery stage and consistent studies could be done in order to overcome the roadblocks hampering further improvement of the lumber species.

"I would like to suggest for you to have a dedicated division in FRIM just to do Acacia Mangium," he said to wood-based sector stakeholders and Sabah Timber Industries Association (STIA) members there.

"I think we have a lot of work to do. We want to do genetic engineering, tissue culture, to

produce a species that is resistant to so many diseases. Similarly with the other plantation species, I think we should have a dedicated division for it," he elaborated, adding there were 236,936 hectares of Acacia plantations in Sarawak and only 63,980 hectares of it in Sabah.

According to Madius, MOSTI also plans to launch a National Blue Ocean Strategy collaboration with FRIM and STIA in terms of maximizing available technology to do research, especially in conquering Sabah's lumber raw material shortage.

He said integrating science, technology and information within government agencies and departments was imperative as the country became increasingly innovation-centric.

This will help in addressing the industry issues and improve on the downstream development areas.

"We are supposed to be a fund driven ministry. We will continue funding but from now on I would like it to be known as a ministry that is promoting technology. The economy should

be technology driven rather than fund driven because with technology, people will come out with money," said Madius.

He added, in terms of the furniture industry, although foreign investors had planted roots or shown interest in the past, lack of raw materials had caused them to move out or deterred them from coming into the state.

However, this will change with sufficient raw material supply.

Sabah will be able to attract lost or new investors and eventually contribute to the current RM6 billion furniture industry in Malaysia, said Madius.

Mosti, through its Community Innofund (ICF) project, funded a STIA-led truck flooring boards from plantation-grown Acacia in Sabah. The main objective of the RM650,000 project is to develop commercial truck flooring boards from plantation-grown Acacia resource in Sabah.

The two-year project, in collaboration with appointed technical consultant FRIM, was successfully concluded in September 2015.