



**“The Acceptance of Vegetables Certification Scheme (VCS) by members of Area Farmers Organization (AFO) of Serian”**

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## ABSTRACT

*In market societies where there is "freedom of choice", it has generally been accepted that individuals and organizations have the right to attempt to have their wants satisfied.*

*This paper attempts to study the acceptance of a scheme, known as the VEGETABLE CERTIFICATION SCHEME (VCS), where farmers are registered with Department of Agriculture in order to produce pesticide-safe vegetables. They have to follow an auditable code of practice on pesticide usage on their farms and the Department would monitor their farms periodically to check on their credentials. A certificate is issued annually subject to the farmers being able to satisfy all the conditions specified under the scheme.*

*The question of whether all the 6812 registered members of AFO Serian support and accept this scheme is interesting to explore. Marketing of VCS certified vegetables demonstrate the significant potentials and AFO Serian have entered niche market in marketing leafy vegetables.*

*This paper also attempts to find out the problems faced by small farmer especially the members of AFO Serian. The need for farmers to produce safe food for public consumption has received much attention and DOA Sarawak has implemented various programmes to encourage and train farmers in producing wholesome vegetables for consumers.*

*The principal legislation for the control of pesticides in Malaysia is the Pesticides Act of 1974. With this act, it safeguarding the population from pesticide residues detrimental to their health, besides ensuring that export of agricultural produce is not adversely affected. With this act being implemented, farmers are taught on the safe and effective use of pesticides.*

*Pesticide contaminated vegetables are still being sold in local markets. This paper also aims to highlight the effects of marketing VCS certified vegetables undertaken by all the players in producing and marketing of it, especially to the income of small farmers or the AFO members.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The need for farmers to produce safe food for public consumption has received much attention in recent years. Towards this end the Department of Agriculture (DOA) Sarawak is committed to the production of pesticide-safe vegetable and has implemented various programmed to encourage and train farmers in producing wholesome vegetables for consumers. These include: the monitoring of pesticides residues in vegetable; the net house system of vegetable cultivation to reduce the usage of pesticides and an aggressive research and development programme on the integrated pest management of vegetables incorporating the concept of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)<sup>1</sup>.

In recent years numerous safe vegetables handling practices have been adopted and implemented by growers, processors, and others along the distribution chain and this has significantly enhanced the safety of fresh vegetables. As part of a supplier's continuous improvement of food safety programs, all suppliers of produce are encouraged to comply with Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) during the production, harvest and packing of all produce items. The emphasis on food safety continues in the example where the products are transferred to the fresh suppliers who use Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and commonly employ other food safety programs such as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP). Similar, appropriate programs are also in place all the way to the end user to assure that produce destined for consumers has been cultivated, harvested, packed, processed, received, held, distributed and handled at retail or foodservice operations in a manner that addresses product safety.

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<sup>1</sup> VEGETABLE CERTIFICATION SCHEME (VCS) <http://www.doa.sarawak.gov.my/vcs.htm>

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Pesticides and Farming Industry

The principal legislation for the control of pesticides in Malaysia is the Pesticides Act of 1974. The main intent of this Act is the control of the manufacture and import of pesticides through registration. Other aspects of control include the licensing of premises selling pesticides and storing them for sale, the proper labeling of pesticides, and control of the import of unregistered pesticides for research and educational purposes<sup>12</sup>.

Pesticides are widely used in producing food.<sup>13</sup> These pesticides may remain in small amounts which are called residues in or on fruits, vegetables, grains, and other foods. To ensure the safety of the food supply, the government regulates the amount of each pesticide that may remain in and on foods.

The term *pesticide* includes many kinds of ingredients used in products, such as insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, insect repellants, weed killers, antimicrobials, and swimming pool chemicals, which are designed to prevent, destroy, repel, or reduce pests of any sort.

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<sup>12</sup> D.A. Razak, A.A. Latiff, M.I. A. Majid, R. Awang CASE STUDY: MALAYSIAN INFORMATION SERVICE ON PESTICIDE TOXICITY (source: <http://www.itp.org/encyc.cpaedia/?d&d=857400051&prevDoc=857400023>)

<sup>13</sup> Setting Tolerances for Pesticide Residues in Foods (source: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/stprf.htm>)