



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Monday, 24 April 2006**

---

#### **Malaysia and Australia join forces against rural brain drain**

Australia and Malaysia cast aside their political differences in March when they joined forces at the inaugural Malaysian Agricultural Education Convention to tackle the issue of keeping skilled agricultural workers on the land.

Australian Agricultural College Corporation (AACC) Director Malcolm McKay was the sole keynote speaker of the two day convention and said it was a great opportunity to discuss AACC's current response to the agricultural labour shortage.

"I was honoured to be the only keynote speaker at the Conference and I believe this privilege recognized the important role the AACC has to play in shaping the agricultural labour force on the international stage," he said.

Held in Petaling Jaya, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur, over 300 delegates attended the convention which analysed the global influences impacting on agricultural labour forces and attracting students to agriculture in Malaysia and Australia.

Mr McKay said there was intense interest from the delegates in Australia's response to the agriculture labour shortage and improving the desirability of agriculture as an occupation.

"Malaysia and Australia are facing similar skill shortage problems in the agricultural sector," he said.

"Urbanisation and migration of people away from rural industries and communities is leaving huge gaps in the agriculture employment market. Tackling perceptions of agriculture is a key factor in reversing its image as a poor paying and declining sector. We have also got to look at this problem from a global perspective and build partnerships with countries like Malaysia for the continued growth of this economically and socially essential industry."

Mr McKay said across Australia and Malaysia the demand for traditional farmers is decreasing while the demand for skilled agricultural workers is increasing.

"This trend can only be met through rapid advances in technology and industry-relevant training," he said.

“The AACC is leading the way in meeting the ongoing and evolving training needs of the agricultural workforce. By providing knowledge and training that is industry relevant, we are helping to fill the labour gaps and promote industry growth.”

The future appears bright for further collaboration between Malaysia and Australia. Mr McKay said it is exciting to look to the future and discuss how skill shortages in the agricultural sector can be best tackled by Australia and Malaysia.

“Conventions like the Malaysian Agricultural Education Convention are an excellent way to bring these issues into the global spotlight,” he said.

“It is important that we share our knowledge and the success of our current initiatives so that we can learn from one another and work towards collaborative solutions that will lead to growth and development in the agricultural industry.”

**Media enquires, interviews:**

Malcolm McKay

Director

Australian Agricultural College Corporation

Phone: (07) 4672 3205 Mobile: 0412 320 006