



Datu Lai Kui Fong

DJBS, KMN

Datu Lai Kui Fong is a renowned Malaysian agricultural scientist and senior public servant who served the nation and Sarawak state with four decades of distinguished service (1977–2017) within the Department of Agriculture, Sarawak.

He holds a Bachelor of Agricultural Science from UPM (Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, or the Malaysian Agricultural University) and a Master of Environmental Science from UNIMAS (Universiti Malaysia Sarawak). Prior to his retirement in 2017, he served as Director of Agriculture, Sarawak (2011–2017) – the most senior position within the Sarawak Agricultural Department - after serving as Deputy Director and in various senior research and management capacities over the preceding four decades.

Datu Lai played significant roles across a wide range of areas across the field of agricultural development in Malaysia including agricultural research, technology development, and commercialization, particularly in rice, vegetables, fruits, coconut, cocoa, oil palm, pepper, and agro-based industries. He coordinated statewide technology transfer initiatives and led numerous projects that were successfully adopted and commercialized by farmers across Sarawak. He has authored and co-authored nearly 80 scientific papers, technical reports, policy papers, and consultancy studies at state, national, and international levels.

Beyond his professional career, Datu Lai has made significant contributions to charitable and community service, notably through his long-standing involvement with the Malaysian Leprosy Relief Association (MaLRA). He served as Chairman of MaLRA Sarawak, Chairman of the MALRA Honorary Farm, and an Executive Committee Member at the national level, where he played an important role in agricultural livelihood programs and rehabilitation initiatives for former leprosy patients. He has also served on hospital visitor boards and provided advisory support to cooperatives and staff welfare organizations.

He has held numerous national and state board appointments, including the Malaysian Pepper Board, Malaysian Cocoa Board, Plant Variety Protection Board, Pesticide Licensing Board, Sarawak Biodiversity Centre, Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB), and CRAUN (Sago Board). As Director of Agriculture, he led major institutional reforms, strengthened governance and performance management, accelerated project delivery, and achieved significant state and national recognition for departmental excellence.

In recognition of his outstanding service to agriculture and society, Datu Lai has been conferred state and federal honours, including Darjah Jasa Bakti Sarawak (the Order of Meritorious Service to Sarawak, or D.J.B.S.) which carries the title “Datu” in 2014, and he was also honoured with the Federal Award Kesatria Mangku Negara (Officer of the Order of the Defender of the Realm, or K.M.N.) in 2007, along with multiple other awards for professional excellence and social service.