

The work of an aquaculture consultant in Malaysia

Mak Wai Yee

Aquaculture technical sales representatives help farmers in preventing fish diseases, maintaining water quality and increasing yield.

Aquaculture is an expanding industry in Malaysia. The same can also be said about aquaculture and fisheries consultancy.

Erin Tan Chung Wei, works as a technical sales representative for Syndel Asia Sdn Bhd, an aquaculture pharmaceutical company. The company provides a one-stop source for all aquaculture needs as well as active and personal technical support in the field.

She has the honour of being probably one of the few women in this country involved in aquaculture technical sales.



TAN: Most farmers seek advice to increase yield

Besides providing technical support, she also helps farmers source for information on how to prevent fish disease, maintain water quality and other issues.

One of her most sought-after expertise is helping farmers increase their yield.

My job involves...

Tan's day at work depends on whether she is in the field or in the office.

A regular day at the office would have her doing paperwork such as preparing reports and quotations and calling up her customers to check

on their progress.

The exciting part is when she gets out of the office and visits the farms.

When Tan calls on her customers, they tell her their problems. For example if they have a new species of fish they would need advice on breeding and maintenance.

During field trips she would help farmers implant salmon derivatives into their fish to help facilitate the laying of eggs.

First, she would have to anaesthetise the fish, weigh it, check on the stage of the eggs before implanting the salmon derivatives. After that, the fish are monitored for egg production.

To qualify you need...

This job requires one to have a diploma or degree related to marine biology, fisheries or aquaculture.

Experience in the fish industry will also get you far in this business.

Tan holds a degree in industrial biotechnology from University Malaya.

She then obtained her masters in zoology in Canada, before coming back here to work with Syndel Asia.

Ever since her university days, she has been dealing with fish, in the fish parasitology lab or in the wild on one of her many field trips.

While in Canada, she was impressed by the huge salmon fishery industry over there.

She has been researching on fish parasites since her early days in university and now specialises in fish diseases.

The best person for the job...

Tan meets fish farmers regularly so she thinks it is important that one projects an image of self-confidence and has the ability to speak well.

It will be an advantage to be multilingual. One of the reasons Tan was hired is that, apart from English and Bahasa Malaysia, she converses fluently in a few Chinese dialects.

Honesty is another important quality because it helps gain the trust of farmers.

You must have a sense of adventure as the job will take you all over Malaysia.

Tan travels to remote areas to implant and monitor broodfish. Staying

there and waking up at designated hours to check on the fish were learning experiences she relished.

Prospects for the future...

A technical support staff can move on to become a manager looking after the overall interest of the company which includes setting up a research-and-development department.

Tan admits that the company she is working in is still relatively small but has much room for expansion.

I love my job because...

Tan loves learning and she enjoys being part of a technical team where she can apply her technical know-how to help local farmers and the aquaculture industry.

She has helped farmers optimise the use of her products and make the products more customer-friendly.

That in turn helps her collect data on what works best for the different type of fish.

This job entails constant travelling and she loves seeing new places and meeting new people.

What I dislike most about my job...

Travelling too much can be a bore especially when one is stuck in the car all by oneself, on a five-hour journey to a farm just for a 20-minute meeting and then driving back.

However, she usually tries to structure a few meetings in the same area on the same trip.

How much can I earn?

A diploma or degree holder with no experience would probably start off with a basic pay of RM1,500 or slightly more.

A person going in with a postgraduate qualification would probably command more than RM2,000 and with commission, earn up to about RM3,000 a month.

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