

News Release

Farmers' friend Hayleys Agro wins accolades for role in agriculture

-- Awarded 3 Gold and 1 Silver at National Agribusiness Council's 'AgBiz' Awards --

The Hayleys Group's enduring involvement in Sri Lanka's agronomy through its multi-faceted interaction with the farmers of the country has become a model for private sector-led extension services in commercial agriculture.

The Group's unique constructive intervention in the advancement of agrarian practices recently received recognition from peer companies and organisations in the agriculture sector, when Hayleys Agro Products Ltd., and its associate Quality Seeds Company Ltd., won three Gold awards and one Silver award at the 'AgBiz Awards' organised by the National Agribusiness Council.

Hayleys Agro Products received the Gold Award in the large scale category for Agricultural Equipment, Machinery and Irrigation, the Gold Award in the large scale category for Agrochemicals and Fertilisers and the Silver Award in the large scale category for Seeds Advisory and Supplies. The Gold award in this category went to its associate, Quality Seeds Company Ltd., a joint venture between the Hayleys Group and Syngenta Seeds BV of Holland.

"These awards are a fitting acknowledgement of the long and silent role Hayleys has played in taking the latest knowledge, techniques and practices in agriculture direct to the farmers in about 20 geographical regions," Hayleys Director and Hayleys Agro Managing Director Rizvi Zaheed said. "We are unique in the provision of such an extensive range of inputs in both material and information terms to our agriculture sector." He also said the company endeavours to work closely with the Department of Agriculture and other relevant agencies.

Hayleys Agro Products has deployed a team of 150 field staff dedicated to agricultural extension services that are focussed on helping farmers increase agro productivity through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes that will bring them greater benefits. The task of these officers, who are playing a role that in the past was played by state agencies, is to transfer to the farmers the latest information developed by Hayleys Agro Products on crops, productivity, advances in planting materials and results of the company's own trialling and adaptative research.

"Hayleys is continuously adding to the vast body of knowledge that exists on agriculture, and a huge effort is being made to take this knowledge to the rural farmers, many of who persist with old methods and practices," Mr. Zaheed explained.

This is done through one-to-one meetings with farmers and conducting farmer training classes and field days modelled on the 'show and tell' method, covering many aspects from seed varieties, nursery management, use of fertilisers and agro chemicals, spraying equipment, safety, harvesting, handling of crops, packaging, crating, transport, reducing post-harvest losses and finding markets for produce. "We also bring in the market perspective to the farmer and grower together with our extension services," Mr Zaheed said.

Hayleys Agro has the advantage of being commercially involved in virtually every stage of the life cycle of agro produce from producing seeds to supporting the export of processed vegetable and fruit, giving the company an unique profile in the agriculture sector, and enabling it to add value at many points and in many aspects.

"Hayleys Agro is the largest player in terms of its range of inputs into the agro sector," said the Hayleys Agro Director/CEO Upali Gangoda, pointing out that the company is the market leader in most agri inputs consisting of crop protection products and speciality low toxicity agrochemicals, agri equipment and is a pioneer in hybridising seed varieties, including high yielding varieties of seed potato.

The company is in the process of setting up its own tissue culture laboratory for the development of high-yielding seed potato varieties for the domestic market, in another example of its commitment to enhancing productivity and revenue for local farmers. The tissue culture facility will be a springboard for the company's entry into high-tech agriculture.

Some of the company's initiatives have already yielded significant results: Trials conducted by Hayleys Agro have shown hill country vegetable farmers how to reduce losses in transport from 25 per cent to 5 per cent, and this model will soon be replicated for the benefit of all farmers. Quality Seeds Co. Ltd, the first and only hybrid flower producer in Sri Lanka is making steady headway in producing seeds that achieve international standards of 95 to 99 per cent germination; adaptative research on bell pepper has enabled the company to achieve yields of four kilograms per plant, while the national average yield is about 1.5 kgs.

"These initiatives and the results achieved can be replicated in many areas for many crops, and are a model for private sector involvement in the development of agriculture," Mr. Zaheed added. "It is a win-win proposition for everybody concerned, the farmer, his customer, his suppliers and the consumers in general."

The Hayleys Group has had a historic involvement with the agronomy of Sri Lanka from its inception as a small proprietorship in Galle 128 years ago. Today, the Group accounts for 3.2 per cent of Sri Lanka's export income, 1 per cent of the country's GDP and 2.4 per cent of domestic value addition.

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A Hayleys Agro field day in progress.



A bell pepper plant at a Hayleys Agro Greenhouse.