

Taiwan drones to give boost to smart agriculture

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While most countries are reeling under the effects of COVID 19, many are watchful about how to prepare for the future. Countries like Taiwan are not only dealing with the pandemic, but are also stepping up to manage forthcoming challenges in various sectors.

Taiwan is known to apply emerging technologies to agriculture which has helped make up for labor shortages as well as create huge business opportunities. Organizations in Taiwan have been developing 'smart agriculture' through drones, satellite aerial photography, and image analysis, which together can be used for various aspects like determining the best harvesting period, accurately predicting the size of the harvest, etc. Efforts are being made to introduce such cutting-edge agricultural technology to various ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries and India.

In Taiwan, drones are being commercially developed to cover numerous fields such as information and communication technology, aerospace and agriculture. Taiwanese aerospace companies are highly recognized in ASEAN markets. GEOSAT Aerospace & Technology Inc., for example, has established a joint venture company in Malaysia, applying commercial drones to increase the production of local palm oil and rice. In the Philippines and at the Taiwan Excellence Smart City Seminar, GEOSAT's ALPAS-Smart Agriculture Unmanned Helicopter was used as a basis to promote smart agriculture solutions, being admired by many agribusiness firms in Mindanao.

Taiwan can contribute specifically to its neighboring Indo-Pacific region in the field of precision agriculture. Mark Wu, Executive Director of TAITRA's Strategic Marketing Department said, "Taiwan's aerospace industry has created a complete supply chain with its cutting-edge products that are highly recognized in the international markets. We are keen to share our knowledge with other countries where smart agriculture can solve aging and labor shortage with pesticide-spraying drones. We are actively investing in new agriculture technology and kicking off industry-academia cooperation while seeking opportunities for

cross-industry alliances.”

Many Taiwan Excellence Award-winning companies have been devoted to integrating the technology for various solutions. ALIGN has developed technology to assist with spraying pesticides in the rice fields, while Thunder Tiger has improved the CX-180 drones through technological cooperation with Chunghwa Telecom to develop the “Chunghwa Telecom Unmanned Air Systems (CHTUAS).” This system overcomes communication obstacles caused by compound disasters.

A report that was released after the biennial Taipei Aerospace & Defense Technology Exhibition (TADTE) organized by the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) in 2019 showed that the number of exhibitors grew 13%, while visitors were more than 42,000 in total. The number of overseas buyers also grew 27%, mostly from Europe, USA, and ASEAN countries. In addition to TADTE, Taiwan’s drone industry will be able to shine in ASEAN countries with TAITRA in 2020, making its debut in the series of Taiwan Expo and Taiwan Excellence Pavilion.

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