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## Challenges to Banana Production in Malaysia: A Threat to Food Security

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*In Malaysia, banana is the second most widely cultivated fruit. However, its production has decreased because of an increasing threat of diseases particularly Moko and Fusarium wilt, high labour costs, high cost of tissue culture planting materials, lack of high yielding varieties, lack of diverse planting materials, unorganised production and inadequate provision of suitable land issues. In the past Fusarium wilt was considered as the most damaging and destructive disease on banana. In 2007, the banana industry was hampered by a bacterial disease which was hitherto not present in Malaysia. The disease has caused major decline in cooking banana such as Pisang Abu, Pisang Awak and Pisang Nipah and to date the disease has also infected dessert bananas. The disease can be controlled by bagging the inflorescence and removing the male flower besides field sanitation and sterilisation of tools. Other diseases that commonly occur in banana cultivation are Sigatoka leaf spots, leaf and fruit speckles and virus diseases. There are four major insects that attack banana of which fruit fly is the most important because it is considered as quarantine pest. Even though there are 14 types of plant parasitic nematodes reported to be associated with banana, they are of less economic importance. To overcome these problems, researches in MARDI are focused on plant resistance, production of disease-free planting materials and integrated control measures.*

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