Ensuring a bountiful harvest

Asiatik Agricultural Industries has since 1972 contributed to food safety through its wide range of trusted agrochemical products that help farmers in the region as well as in Africa, the Middle East and India increase crop yields. BY MAETINI SIBM, NS MEI YI, ZHAO JIAQI, ZHOU SIU

Going global, growing local
Asiatik began as a local trading company. Its founder, Chan Chih Nai, would travel from farm to farm on his bicycle selling agrochemical products.

From the outset, Asiatik saw greater business potential in other markets as compared to the smaller domestic market in Singapore, which had limited growth opportunities.

In 1977, Asiatik made its first venture overseas into Sabah, Sarawak and India, just five years after the company was established. Since then, overseas expansion has never stopped.

As the company ventured further to other regions, liaison offices were set up in key markets such as Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Rwanda, Kenya, Ivory Coast and Lebanon. These offices helped to expedite the process of obtaining and managing the necessary local certifications and licenses to operate in new markets. This allowed Asiatik to establish stronger market presence and gain real-time information to facilitate business operations and growth.

Mergers and acquisitions also are a key part of Asiatik’s growth strategy. In 1982, Asiatik acquired a British company, which gave them the necessary expertise to begin manufacturing its own products in Singapore.

In 2004, Asiatik directly entered the African market by acquiring a German company that had been Asiatik’s African distributor since the 1990s.

This acquisition was instrumental in allowing Asiatik to establish a foothold on the continent, where the company has now established its presence in Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast.

The company’s clear customer positioning and value proposition has also contributed to its success in numerous markets.

With its state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Singapore, it is able to command a higher price premium by providing quality, tailored solutions to meet its customers’ needs.

Building relationships
A crucial part of Asiatik’s success formula is its dedication towards building long-term relationships directly with its customers. “Customers appreciate that we are committed to them. By understanding their needs and customising solutions for them, we are able to build strong relationships with them,” shares Andrew Chan, Asiatik’s marketing director.

The company regularly visits farmers to understand the types of problems they face and provide solutions. Apart from such visits, field demonstrations and farmers’ meetings also serve as opportunities to connect with the local farm communities to build brand awareness. Asiatik also organises exchange programmes for its customers in different countries to encourage cross learning and explore new opportunities.

As the spectrum of pests and diseases vary widely from country to country, Asiatik also partners with local stakeholders to conduct efficacy trials in order to produce the right agrochemical products for the market.

In Myanmar, where the agricultural ecosystem is ideal, Asiatik establishes its own dedicated technical development team to collect market intelligence on the ground. The teams gather information on the latest product trends and receive feedback and suggestions from customers.

Embracing innovation
Innovation has played a large role in creating effective solutions for Asiatik’s users. The company works closely with government agencies and educational institutions to develop new products as well as refine existing ones. It also utilises its research farm in Myanmar to experiment with methods to harness technology, such as the potential use of drones for chemical applications and crop surveillance.

Asiatik recently launched CropSov, a mobile app that allows farmers to submit photos or videos of their crop problems and receive real-time technical support. The farmers will be given tailored product recommendations and directions to nearby stores carrying the products. In the longer term, Asiatik hopes to apply data analytics to track trends in the frequency and pattern of pest and disease outbreaks, allowing it to market suitable products for each region in a timelier and more effective manner.

Future opportunities
As a growing agribusiness, Asiatik has plans to explore new markets. The company also intends to venture into potential growth areas such as aquaculture and animal health.

In spite of environmental and regulatory challenges, Asiatik remains committed to its company philosophy of building long-term relationships while pursuing its mission of contributing towards food security and public health.