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Culture Collection and Breeding of Edible Mushrooms

A week-long Workshop on "Culture Collection and Breeding of Edible Mushrooms" which aims at updating the state-of-the-art technology in the mushroom field started off with an Opening Ceremony yesterday (July 15) at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

At the Opening Ceremony, Prof Charles K Kao, Vice-Chancellor of the Chinese University, pointed out that the increasing use of waste materials as substrates for mushroom cultivation had considerable significance for the environment.

Edible mushrooms have long served as a food source for mankind and their cultivation represents a major industry in various countries in Asia and elsewhere in the world. According to Prof Kao, scientists have recently recognized the medicinal values of edible mushrooms. Several species are now known to produce pharmacologically active compounds such as anti-tumour agents as well as substances which reduce cholesterol level in our bodies and which thereby could serve to lower the incidence of cardiovascular disease.

In Prof Kao's view, it is essential that existing strains of edible fungi are preserved and it is equally important that breeding programmes be undertaken to propagate new strains with enhanced or additional desirable characteristics. Prof S T Chang, Chairman of the local Organizing Committee for the Workshop, expressed that the Workshop has provided a forum for the discussion of recent advances in the field and for the generation of new ideas.

More than 60 scholars and scientists from local and international organizations have been attending the Workshop to share their expertise and experiences. Academics from Canada, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom, USA and Vietnam would present papers in the Workshop.

The Workshop is jointly sponsored by the Department of Biology of the Chinese University and the UNESCO Regional Network for Microbiology in Southeast Asia, and supported by Beijing-Hong Kong Academic Exchange Centre, the Croucher Foundation and Glaxo Hong Kong Limited.

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