

# Register, swiftlet farmers told

**KUCHING:** Only about 400 out of the 5,000 swiftlet farm operators in Sarawak have registered with the Veterinary Department.

Nationwide, the department has registered 800 swiftlet farm operators who produce bird's nests.

In the peninsula where swiftlet farming has been fast catching up, most swiftlet farm owners had registered with the government. However, the majority of those in Sarawak, which constituted 40 per cent of total bird's nest exports, have yet to do so.

"All swiftlet farmers and exporters are urged to register with the Veterinary Department to ensure they fulfil all the criteria set by the government," said Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry's deputy secretary-general (Planning), Datuk Raihan Sharif.

This would enable the government to issue certificates of health as well as give accreditation to the bird's nest entrepreneurs whose production, process and packaging need to meet a

higher standard, he said.

The move would ensure that the product would comply with the health standard and was safe to be exported to China, he added.

The move to regulate the industry was taken after China detected high levels of nitrate in bird's nests exported from Malaysia.

A check last July found that Malaysian bird's nest samples contained 200 parts per million (ppm) of nitrate.

China had stopped the import of bird's nests from Malaysia following the detection. The World Health Organisation's allowable level is 34 ppm.

Raihan said his ministry and the Health Ministry were working with the Chinese authorities to resolve difficulties in

exporting bird's nests to China.

"We are now trying to register all exporters so that China would only take in these products."

He acknowledged there was a drop in the price of bird's nest because of the allegation.

"However, once Malaysia is able to regulate its bird's nest quality and take care of the safety issue, the price will go up again," Raihan said at a press conference after the National Agro Food Policy Workshop here yesterday.

He said with the new standards imposed, the government was targeting to generate RM1 billion from the bird's nest industry as it was one of

the focus sectors under the national key economic areas.



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Datuk Raihan Sharif**