

# 'Be clean to save bird's nest trade'

**CHINA BAN:** Finding alternative ways to sell products won't resolve issue, says expert

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**T**HE only way to save the bird's nest industry is to find ways to avoid producing contaminated products.

Former Bird's Nest Merchant Industry Association of Johor president Dr Tan Boon Siong said yesterday the Health Ministry should focus on tackling the main problem that caused China to temporarily ban imports from Malaysia.

"It is all about the contamination of our bird's nests. The authorities should look into how to clean up the nests and not find alternative ways to sell the products," he said yesterday.

On Saturday, Health Minister

Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai had said that a campaign to promote bird's nest-based products among locals would be launched to save the bird's nest industry which had declined due to overproduction.

He had earlier said bird's nests could, for instance, be made into soup.

The ministry should impose a stricter set of rules and regulations to govern bird's nest production, Tan said.

"There should be a proper guideline in the production of bird's nests to ensure they are safe for consumption.

"If harvesters could ensure the quality of bird's nests by keeping their farms clean, I'm sure no one will reject their products."

He said while the government

was trying to resolve the issue with China, local harvesters should ensure that their farms were well-maintained and avoid chemical usage.

A temporary ban had been imposed by China in July last year after the country allegedly found that Malaysia's bird's nest samples contained 200 parts per million (ppm) of nitrate.

(The standard level allowed by the World Health Organisation is 34ppm.)

Sarawak Bird's Nest Import and Export Association chairman Liew Tian Liang, however, said the ministry's suggestion to focus on downstream products could be one of the solutions to relieve the burden faced by manufacturers.

He said the prices of harvested bird's nests had dropped by 50 per cent now compared with the same period last year. Good quality bird's nests are now sold at between RM2,000 and RM3,000.