



# **JABATAN PERKHIDMATAN VETERINAR**

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## Stop Smuggling To Fix Food Security: Gopeng MP

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*Gopeng MP Tan Kar Hing speaks to CodeBlue in an interview in Parliament on November 6, 2025. Picture by Saw Siew Feng for CodeBlue.*

Gopeng MP Tan Kar Hing links border leakages to disease outbreaks and price distortions, saying producers face a triple squeeze: slow land conversion, high disease control costs, and limited financing, with meat smuggling now an “annual festival” during festive periods.

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 13 — Gopeng MP Tan Kar Hing has called smuggling the “main threat” to Malaysia’s food security, saying the continued leakage of meat

and livestock across borders has suppressed domestic investment, worsened disease spread, and pushed local producers out of the industry.

Tan, who sits on the Parliament Special Select Committee on Domestic Trade, Entrepreneurship, Cost of Living, and Agriculture, said smuggling has become so entrenched that it distorts local supply, fuels outbreaks, and discourages farmers from scaling up.

The PKR MP described smuggling as routine and predictable, particularly during festive periods when demand for meat rises.

“Smuggling issues happen all the while,” Tan told CodeBlue in an interview at Parliament last Thursday (November 6). “Everybody also knows that smuggling beef, especially live or frozen, from the border is considered an annual festive event. So you can imagine how serious it is. And you can’t stop it from happening.”

He said enforcement alone has not been a sufficient deterrent because profit margins in the illegal meat trade remain high.

“Of course, we can see many news reports of enforcement managing to stop these smuggling activities. But the industry knows very well that even when law enforcement manages to stop a container of smuggled meat and agricultural products, they can afford to lose it,” Tan said.

“So meaning that the margin for them is very huge, and to a certain extent, they don’t really worry about it. And knowing that Malaysia’s self-sufficiency is very low, it gives space for them to continue doing it. So that’s our challenge.”

## **‘If Smuggling Continues, No One Will Invest’**

Tan said farmers and producers have no incentive to scale up operations when smuggled meat undercuts local supply at prices that domestic producers cannot match.

“If smuggling keeps coming in, no one would have interest in investing in this segment, especially when there are bureaucratic procedures, disease issues, land problems, and animal feed prices shoot up,” he said.

“So we’ll be in this industry and will only heavily depend on imported products for the upcoming 10 to 30 years if we do not stop smuggling or reduce smuggling drastically.”

Tan said he has raised the issue repeatedly in Parliament, but the responses have not been “convincing” because multiple agencies must act together to control border leakages.

The UPM graduate said the single most important policy reform for agriculture and livestock is straightforward: strengthen border enforcement.

“Stop smuggling,” Tan said.

“The importance is how we could make sure our border is safe and no further smuggling comes into Malaysia. Otherwise, no one would want to invest.”

### African Swine Fever Squeezes Pig Farmers, Smuggled Pork Linked to ASF Spread

Self-sufficiency in pork has dropped to about 60 per cent after African swine fever (ASF) infected herds across several states.

Tan said pig farmers currently face simultaneous pressures: bureaucratic land conversion processes, costly disease control requirements, and continued leakage of smuggled pork into the market.

States such as Perak, Penang, and Selangor are moving toward “smart pig farm” modernisation, but farmers must convert land titles from agricultural to industrial use – a process that Tan said “could take up to months or even years”.

“Every single day counts for the farmers,” he said.

On disease control, Tan noted that the current “one farm, fully cull” response to ASF requires entire herds to be destroyed when infection is detected. “Once the farm is fully culled, especially for pig

farms, they need one to even three years to rebuild everything,” Tan said.

He added there is no targeted government assistance for affected farms, and only CIMB currently provides financing to the sector.

Tan said smuggled pork has also contributed directly to ASF outbreaks. “In 2023, we found hundreds of thousands worth of smuggled pork in Perak, and when it was examined, ASF elements were found in the meat. So that’s one of the ways ASF infected the local farm as well,” he said.

The PH lawmaker said Malaysia should study shifting from full-farm culling to a regionalised disease control approach that isolates affected zones without forcing farmers to rebuild entire operations.

Tan said Malaysia’s recent acceptance of regionalisation in the Malaysia-United States Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) shows that the government is open to zone-based disease management in principle.

Malaysia recently signed the Malaysia-United States Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART), under which Malaysia will recognise US

food safety and inspection systems for meat, poultry, and dairy as meeting local import standards.

The pact also streamlines halal certification procedures for US exports and commits Malaysia to adopt a regionalised, or zone-based, approach to disease control, rather than imposing blanket import bans during outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) or African swine fever (ASF).

Tan said the same regionalisation principle should be applied domestically for ASF, instead of requiring full-farm culling. “If we are going to apply the regionalisation approach overseas in the US, I think the same thing has to apply in Malaysia. Of course, to balance the food safety and the farmers’ welfare, we need to find a balance point,” he said.

ASF has already been declared endemic in Malaysia, with ongoing outbreaks reported across several pig-farming states. In Penang, ASF outbreaks led to the culling of 2,060 pigs across four farms as of August 1, including 351 that died from infection and 1,709 that were culled to contain its spread, according to Penang’s DVS.-CODEBLUE

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