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Swiftlet farming grows quickly in east coast

KOTA BARU: The East Coast Economic Region (ECER) states are ramping up swiftlet farming with Kelantan emerging as the country's second-largest swiftlet farmer, after Perak.

The farms produce highly-prized birds nests made by male swiftlets which deposit strands of saliva to make the nests.

A kilogram of unprocessed white edible birds nest was priced at between RM4,500 and RM6,000 in 2006, while its processed version fetches retail prices of RM15,000 to RM25,000 in Hong Kong and China.

World consumption of bird's nests in 2006 was estimated in the vicinity of RM8bil to RM12bil.

Hong Kong, at 50%, is the world's biggest buyer of bird's nests while China stands at 8%, Taiwan 4% and Macau 3%. The world consumption weight was estimated at 160 tonnes for 2006.

According to Wikipedia, the delicacy is catching on quickly in the United States.

As of June 2004, there were 300 bird's nest locations in Kelantan, especially in Kota Baru, Tumpat and Rantau Panjang.

Other swiftlet farms in the ECER are in Pasir Mas in Kelantan; Kampung Air Papan in Mersing; Kuala Besut, Kuala Terengganu, Tok Soboh, Kampung Pinang in Terengganu; as well as Rompin and Pekan in Pahang.

Nespure Birdsnest Sdn Bhd managing director Ng Ching Phock said that swiftlet farming was a new industry generating jobs and income for Kelantan's economy.

With an outlet and swiftlet farm in Kota Baru, Nespure markets bird's nest products directly and through third parties.

It also operates the first outlet in east coast selling sea swiftlet nest products.