

Thai farmers on the cash trail with snail slime



Phatinisiri Thangkeaw milking a snail of its serum at her farm in Nakhon Nayok province

“We found that our slime was very intense because the snails eat everything, including vegetables, grains and even mushrooms... producing good quality slime. the mucus can be used to heal sunburn and heal wounds

PHATINISIRI THANGKEAW



Snails eating cucumbers at the Acha Snail Park in Nakhon Nayok province.

● With her 1,000 snails, the teacher makes an extra \$320 to \$650 a month

● It “triggers the skin cells... and helps heal the skin”

Nakhon Nayok, Thailand

Giant snails inch across a plate of pumpkin and cucumber in central Thailand, an “organic” diet to tease the prized collagen-rich mucus from the molluscs, which to some cosmetic firms are now

more valuable than gold.

The snails at Phatinisiri Thangkeaw’s farm were once the scourge of rice farmers, loathed for eating the buds of new crops.

“Farmers used to throw them on the road or in the rivers,” Phatinisiri said. “But now they sell them to me to earn extra money.”

With her 1,000 snails, the teacher makes an extra \$320 to \$650 a month.

It is one of more than 80 farms in Nakhon Nayok province, two hours from the capital Bangkok, cashing in on the global snail beauty market, estimated at \$314 million, according to research group Coherent Market Insights.

The precious slime is patiently

“milked” from the glands of the snail by dripping water over it using a pipette.

Its raw form is sold to Aden International, a Thai-based cosmetics company that primarily ships its products to Korea and the US.

The sole snail slime producer in Thailand, Aden started three years ago as a business-savvy solution to the snail infestation in Nakhon Nayok, said founder Kitpong Putarathuvanun.

And his bet paid off -- Kitpong sells the serum under the Acha brand, but also supplies Korean and American cosmetic companies with a dried powder at 1.8 million baht (\$58,200) per kilogram, he said.

Gold is currently worth \$46,300 a kilogram.

Compared to Aden’s snail slime, the mucus produced in China -- milked daily instead of once every three weeks in Thailand -- is valued at about 80,000 baht (\$2,600) per kilogram, Kitpong said.

“We found that our slime was very intense because the snails eat everything, including vegetables, grains and even mushrooms... producing good quality slime,” he said, explaining that the mucus can be used to heal sunburn and “heal wounds”.

Somkamol Manchun, the doctor in charge of the purification process, said snail mucus contains collagen and elastin -- ingredients that “can make

skin firm with less wrinkles”.

It “triggers the skin cells... and helps heal the skin”.

At the moment, no scientific studies have been done on the curative qualities of snail serum and slime, but snail farmer Phatinisiri is already feeling the market heat up.

Two years ago, she was the first in the area to try farming the slime, she said, and villagers readily gave her what they considered pests.

“Now I buy snails at about 25 baht to 30 baht (about \$1) per kilogram,” she said. “But many people are doing snail farms now so the competition is high.”

Indian government seeks to tap foreign lenders for small firms: sources

● The government is in discussions with Germany’s state-owned development bank KfW Group, the World Bank and some Canadian institutions

● India has 63 million firms in the micro, small and medium firm sector

● Seeks to provide as much as \$14.5 billion in credit

Reuters | New Delhi

India’s government is in talks with foreign lenders to provide as much as \$14.5 billion in credit to millions of its small firms, two officials said.

The government is in discussions with multiple foreign lenders, including Germany’s state-owned development bank KfW Group, the World Bank and some Canadian institutions to extend lines of credit to small enterprises, one of the officials, who did not want to be identified, told Reuters.

KfW’s India office confirmed the discussions, though the



A worker operates a lathe as he makes spare parts of car gearboxes at a workshop in Kolkata, India

“We are exploring, we are having discussions with various funding agencies if something can be done (for small and medium firms)

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main focus was on credit lines to support small businesses’ solar power generation. The talks were at an early stage, KfW said.

A spokesman for World Bank in India yesterday said the discussions with the government were in the early stages, adding that “further rounds of consultations will help us define the contours of this collaboration”.

The official said the government plans to source up to 1 trillion Indian rupees of loans from foreign institutions.

“We are exploring, we are having discussions with various funding agencies if something can be done (for small and medium firms),” the second official said.

The officials did not provide full details of the discussions they are having with banks, or identify all those they are talking to, but said talks are at a very early stage.

India’s micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) ministry is discussing the proposal to pull

in foreign banks with the country’s ministry of finance, which will make a final call, the second official said.

The push for foreign loans comes on the heels of the Indian government’s announcement earlier this month that it plans to borrow about 700 billion rupees by issuing overseas sovereign bonds.

India’s 63 million firms in the micro, small and medium firm sector are responsible for more than a quarter of the country’s manufacturing and services output, and must be re-energized for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government to kick-start the economy.

Last month, a study by a Reserve Bank of India panel said the overall deficit in credit for the MSME sector is estimated at about 20 trillion rupees to 25 trillion rupees.

But lending to such firms can be risky as some lack proper financial information, such as historical cash flow data, which makes it challenging for banks to assess the credit risks.

To mitigate such risks for foreign banks, the loans would be given sovereign guarantees and be routed through Indian government agencies such as the Small Industries Development Bank of India, the first official said.

China Southern Airlines to receive \$4 billion capital injection

Reuters | Shanghai

China Southern Airlines will carry out an equity diversification plan that will involve the injection of 30 billion yuan (\$4.36 billion) of capital from three investors, the firm announced on Saturday.

The Guangdong Hengjian Investment Holding Corporation, the Guangzhou Urban Construction Investment Group and the Shenzhen Penghang Equity Investment Fund will each inject 10 billion yuan into the airline, as part of the country’s efforts to diversify ownership structures among state-owned firms.

The move will significantly improve the company’s debt-to-asset ratio, generate funds for its growth and help modernize its decision-making mechanisms, the announcement said.

It will also use the funds to serve its main air transportation business, pay for construction related to China’s Belt and Road Initiative and support aviation development in cities in the southern province of Guangdong.

China Southern is one of 96 enterprises owned and administered directly by the central government.