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Prices of Chinese herbs shoot up due to dry spell in China

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GEORGE TOWN: The prices of several Chinese herbs have sky-rocketed to as much as 300% over the last six months due to the prolonged hot spell in China.

The dry weather in Sichuan, Gui Zhou, Yunnan and Guang Yi has affected the growth of the herbal plants, causing a drop in production for the worldwide market, including Malaysia.



Siew Siew Seng Loong Medicine shop manager Khaw Lim Swee Nam choosing a Pao Shen or American ginseng.

Among those affected are Tian Qi (*Panax notoginseng*), which is imported from Yunnan. It used to be sold for about RM90 per kg but has now shot up to about RM300 per kg.

Siew Seng Loong Medicine shop manager Khaw Lim Swee Nam said the prices for the herb was also changing on a daily basis. "Tian Qi is good for blood circulation. When supply drops, its demand increases and causes the price to soar. Even Pu Er tea, also from Yunnan, is more expensive now. It is sold from RM50 to RM100 per block, depending on the grade, compared to RM30 to RM50 half a year ago," he said Friday.

He added that many tea trees had dried up and it would take eight years for another plant to be fully grown.

Pak Hoe Tong Medical and Liquor shop assistant Teoh Hai Wei said the price of Tian Qi had risen dramatically as it was used to produce many types of Chinese medicine. "It helps to lower the cholesterol and is highly beneficial for stroke, Parkinson and bypass patients," he said.

As for cordyceps or Dong Chong Cao, the price now is RM16,000 per kg compared to RM15,000 per kg.

Teoh said the herb was imported from Sichuan and Tibet and beneficial for the lungs. He, however, said most people don't buy it in kilograms but only in a few grams.



The various Chinese herbs (from left clockwise) Jin Yin Hua or Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera Japonica*), Du Zhong or *Eucommia ulmoides*, cordyceps or Dong Chong Cao, Tian Qi or *Panax notoginseng* and Pao Shen or American ginseng.

Other herbs that have seen price increases in the past six months include the Jin Yin Hua (Japanese honeysuckle or *Lonicera Japonica*), which now costs RM200 per kg compared to RM60 per kg and Pao Shen or American Ginseng, which used to cost RM9,000 per kg, but now carries a price tag of RM13,000 per kg.

Teoh said the prices of Chinese herbs might rise further if the dry spell continued.